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THE FINDING OF PHEIDIPPIDES
AND OTHER POEMS

THE
FINDING OF PHEIDIPPIDES
AND
OTHER POEMS

BY
EDWARD HENRY PEMBER



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THE FINDING OF PHEIDIPPIDES.

I INSCRIBE this Poem to my friend,

W. J. COURTHOPE Esq., C.B.

late Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford,
who suggested the subject to me, and to whom for a
similar reason, and but for an inadvertence, I should
have dedicated my “Death-Song of Thamyris.”

ARGUMENT.

I HAVE been asked to tell all I know about Pheidippides, that famous Athenian runner, who carried in two days from Athens to Sparta, a distance of 150 miles, the news of the Persian landing at Marathon; who was met by Pan on his way back, was promised the assistance of the God on behalf of the Greeks, and mysteriously disappears from history after that achievement.

Now it so happens, that, no matter how or when—as St. Paul says, “whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell”—I found myself travelling from Sparta to Argos, and fell in with a young Athenian noble, who, in some state, with a retinue of servants and sumpter-horses, was making the same journey. A glance at him showed his amazing beauty of person, and a brief talk with him the brilliance and cultivation of his mind. I did not take so favourable an impression of his moral character, but that was unlikely to affect the pleasure of a temporary acquaintance, and so, when he asked me to join his company, I gladly consented. He told me that he was to make a detour of some miles in order to visit a remarkable old man, an octogenarian, who was stated confidently by some of his friends in Sparta to be this very Pheidippides.

The story ran that at the close of the last Persian war the great runner had emigrated from Athens to Arcadia, in order to cultivate, in the God's own province, his gratitude to and reverence for Pan, whom he regarded as the saviour of his

country. It struck me that my young companion—who told me, by the way, that he was only eighteen years of age, and that his name was Alcibiades—was actuated rather by vanity and the hope to gain credit for his discovery on his return to Athens, than by any sentiment of respectful pilgrimage.

We duly arrived at the home of the illustrious exile, and found that he was indeed the lost Pheidippides. We saw a venerable figure, in surroundings which indicated at once a philosophic retirement and a modest affluence. The explanation which my young friend gave of his own lineage proved an immediate passport. Pheidippides had been the friend of his grandfather, and received him with open arms. He was good enough to extend his welcome to me. No sooner had we refreshed ourselves than Alcibiades gave the reins to his curiosity, and drew from our aged host a full narrative, not only of his great adventure, but of the motive and occupations of his exile.

It seems that he fought at Marathon, married a lady to whom he had been early betrothed, that she died, and that he thereupon, having vainly courted death at Artemisium, Salamis, and Platæa, conceived so keen a distaste for public life that he determined to seek consolation in rural retirement. His memory of Pan led him to select a spot upon the lower slopes of Mount Parthenium. There he had lived, cultivating the worship of the Deity who had so distinguished him, learning, as he told us, to see the divine life in natural objects, and striving by precept and example to elevate and sweeten the lives of the peasants among whom he had fixed his home.

His story was somewhat long and elaborate, broken at whiles by the interjected impertinences of the shallow but brilliant Alcibiades. I listened silently, not only much impressed by the interesting character of the narrative, but also struck beyond measure by the contrast between the two personages before me. The one aged, calm, dignified, perhaps

a little pompous ; moral even to rigidity, simple, reverent, and wise. The other young, rash, dangerous, without scruple or reserve ; specious, rapid, and brilliant, lacking all sense of duty and faculty of veneration. It was obvious that the old man saw through the young one at the first glance ; and probably he only bore with him from a sense of hospitality due to the representative of a family with which he had been closely intimate in time past.

Towards the close of our long interview a large company of villagers of both sexes presented themselves at the Temple of Pan hard by. They were holding some simple festival of the God, and had come with songs and offerings. The Maidens first sang a hymn, as I remember, in praise of Summer ; then the Youths followed with another more directly addressed to the God himself ; and lastly the old men sang a pleasantly-conceived canticle, expressing their own content with old age, and their acquiescence in the approach of decay and death.

I think that my young companion, while he continued to avow his interest, had in reality become somewhat weary of this rustic display. He suddenly took occasion to espy his equipage, and, as I thought a little abruptly, took his leave of our venerable entertainer.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

SCENE, IN THE PORTICO OF A HOUSE UPON ONE OF
THE SLOPES OF MOUNT PARTHENIUM.

PERSONAGES.

ALCIBIADES, THE ATHENIAN, ÆTAT. 18.

PHEIDIPPIDES, THE ATHENIAN, ÆTAT. 78.

Villagers. Youths, Maidens, and Old People of both
Sexes.

A TEMPLE OF PAN HARD BY.

Men, like to stones that fall into the hands
 Of some divinely-taught artificer,
 Who circles their inferiority
 With adventitious excellence, become
 More famous, from their setting than themselves :
 And such am I. As we both know, 'tis true
 That in two wondrous days and nights, when war
 Knit muscles and strung nerves through Attica,
 Till with our poor ten thousand harvesters
 We mowed the Persian sheaves at Marathon,
 I ran from Athens to cold Sparta's gates,
 To bring the message of the Persian landing.
 A dozen other youths had done the like,
 Had the need been ; and that which made my fame
 Might well have happened unto whom you will.
 Pan met with me.

Alc. Ah, but Pan chose the man !
 'Tis true, we differ through the choice of Heaven ;
 But then, the choice ! And now, unless there be
 Aught impious in my asking or thy telling,
 Say what befell thee.

Pheid. Son of Cleinias,
 'Twere no impiety in me to tell
 Alike both what I saw and what I heard ;

For so He charged me ; but, thyself, beware
Lest thou, of levity alone, indulge
Thine own irreverent and careless youth
With knowledge of a new and hidden thing,
Enquiring thus ; the Gods have little love
For such as pry, and spy, and worship not.

Alc. Nay, I would know ; 'twere something in
the clash

Of philosophic conflict, amid doubt
And logic, 'gainst the laughter of the Schools
To set the tale, told in his serious age,
Of one who hath held converse with a God.

Pheid. Then shalt thou hear ; doubtless thou
knowest well

How Sparta, whether clinging to old forms,
As her wont is, or shrinking to come forth
And risk her all for Athens—I know not—
Refused to march till after a full moon.
I started, charged with her untoward reply.
Caryæ I passed, and Tegea, and had left
Pallantium to the west ; but cast mine eyes
E'en as I ran, with clenched hands at my breast,
On distant Mænalus, whose snowy tops,
As I bethought me, are so often roused

12 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

By Pan's gay hunting calls ; nor less at eve
Are soothed by gentler echoes from below,
Whene'er he draweth, idling through the pines,
And musing on lost Syrinx 'neath the moon,
Long music from the stepped and tuneful reeds
He named for love of her. My path had led
By meads and cornlands, over flowery slopes
Studded with olives, through grave chestnut
 woods

Made gay with music of the cattle-bells ;
And now was battling with the sterner ridge,
That wards Arcadia from Argolis.
Steep rose it through an upland pasture set
With mossy boulders ; low the herbage grew,
Wind swept, close nibbled by the mountain goats ;
But wheresoe'er the nooks gave shelter, sprang
Blue aconite and thistles creamy-topped,
Tufting the hollows ; for awhile perforce
I clomb with hand and foot, again at whiles
Paused, glancing upward to assure my way.
When on a sudden, lo, the God himself,
The son of Hermes and swart Dryope,
The pride of Pelops' Isle, Arcadian born,
Stood fronting me.

Alc. Great Zeus ; and thou wert firm ?
I should have fled !

Pheid. I had no fear of him ;
His apparition was all kindness ;
And as I gazed, I felt his favour given
To mark him unreprieved.

Alc. His face, his form,
Give me his portraiture !

Pheid. His horns and hoofs,
Translucent, delicately gleamed, as though
Illumined from within ; unnumbered hues
They showed, as glow those iridescent shells
Wherein the pearl lies buried ; every tint
Of leaves they took and flowers, or of the sky
Decked out by Eos or by Hespera :
Crisp ringlets clung about his shapely limbs,
Lustrous, and softer than the cygnet's down,
Clothing them as the Summer loves to clothe
Broad reaches of the bosom of the Earth
With dimpling softness of the heather bloom,
Ere yet the Sun hath loved it overmuch,
And parched its purple with his fevered kisses.

Alc. Well told, well told, and wondrous as well
told !

14 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

Pheid. His mien was staid and gentle, and his
 brows
And ruddy cheeks spread smooth with health and
 power ;
While in his gait erect, his glance, his smile,
And motions native to his form, shone forth
The dignity and ease of life divine.
He bent on me the beam of serious eyes,
And said : “ Pheidippides of Attica,
I know thy zeal, thine errand, and its issue ;
Tell them of Athens how I met with thee
Here on Parthenium ; bid them nought abate
Of high resolve in facing perilous odds,
Though Sparta be half fearful and half false.
I will be there, and fighting, spread the fear
That men have named of me among the Medes ;
So that ten thousand shall confound and scatter
Ten times ten thousand, chasing and slaying them
Far over fennel-feathered Marathon,
Among the swamps and sandhills of her Bay.
This will I do, though they have slighted me,
Me a great God, and I be pained thereby ;
For pain it is when men whom we have loved
Repay us not with worship, gift, or prayer.

Go thou, fight too ; I will sustain thy life ;
Then come thou back, and learn my worship here.”
All this I heard with downcast eyes ; he ceased ;
I looked, and he was gone.

Alc. What didst thou then ?

My yearning to dig deep in unsearched veins
Of human feeling hath outstripped thy tale.

Pheid. Our light-cast yearnings are as perils
sown ;

Their roots work havoc in the hearts they rend ;
Their fruit, brought home, is but as garnered ruin.
Accept this warning from thy grandsire's friend,
Fair youth ; thy beauty, wealth, impetuous soul,
Like laughing Dæmons wait upon thy ways,
Albeit thou deem'st them gifts of the great Gods.
I tremble lest thou ne'er may'st reach the goal
Of calm old age.

Alc. My father, whom the Gods
Love best die soonest, saith the Sage.

Pheid. Not so :

I know well how Pan loved me, and my years
Approach fourscore ; it cannot well be good
To lose all further chance of living well.

Alc. But what of living ill ?

That sense I had not felt before he came,
So keen was I upon mine errand, swept
Like a wild wind about me, and a horror
His presence had not roused, his very loss
Awakened ; panting hard I scaled the ridge,
And down the further steep from stone to stone
Plunged shuddering, till I reached a lawny slope,
Then fled in terror to the pines below ;
Dreading I know not what, but glancing back,
As one by haunting hostile shapes pursued,
Though seeing nought.

Alc. Perchance 'twas Pan himself
Who smote thee, willing thou shouldst learn by
proof,

With what all-powerful amazement He
Would sweep the Persian hosts o'er Marathon.
And thou didst fight at Marathon ?

Pheid. I fought,
And Pan preserved me ; when their battle turned,
Hither and thither through the mighty wreck
I flew, all heedless, pausing not to slay,
Nor aught in fear ; but shouting " Pan ! 'Tis Pan !
Arcadian Pan, who loveth hills and vales,
Great son of Hermes and proud Dryope,

To make thy living tomb among these wilds,
Straight after Marathon ?

Pheid. Nay, boy ; my love

Both for the life thou namest, and for one
Dearer to me than Athens, held me there.
She died, just when the news ran through the land
That haughty Xerxes with his Asian hordes
Had yoked the Hellespont. In hope of death
I sailed to Artemisium, then turned
To Salamis, and at Platæa fought,
And yet came home unscathed. My hearth was
cold,

And my heart desolate ; I had lost all love
For action and the turmoil of the town ;
And in my solitary wanderings
As scout and runner ; over many a vale,
By many a sunny mountain-path, I marked
Their placid villages beyond the pale
Of devastating war, too often waged
For worse than nought ; I saw the life unstirred
By clash of civic faction, feverish greed,
And laboured lies of party strife ; where Peace,
Rough Plenty, and the worship of the Gods,
Gave, or might give 'neath some slight tutelage

20 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

Of headship new, a fairer grace than aught
That cometh of our soiled and stifling lives
In cities ; and I longed for harbour there,
Among them, if not of them.

Alc. Just when life

Was rounding to the fulness of its moon,
To dote on an eclipse !

Pheid. Then too, the love

Of Earth and all her beauties, stored in haste,
Like wild fruits snatched in passing, as I ran,
Worked like a leaven in me. How I marked
The changing folds of mountain chains ; the dance
Of rivers down their gorges ; mastered sheets
Of sober reeds that failed to keep the lakes
From laughing with their playmate breezes ; breadths
Of flowery plain with here and there a herd
As ruddy as their roses ; uplands streaked
By fleecy bands ; and all the wealth and warmth
Of vineyard, cornland, oliveyard, and byre !
All these I grew to love, and with their love
Sprang worship, and a mystic sense of powers,
Life, motives, qualities, joy, suffering,
That lay perchance behind this visible world ;
An all-pervading and inspiring soul,

Dowering all things and dominating all.

Alc. Thou talkest much as Socrates hath talked,
While he and I have wandered hour by hour,
Lost in discourse among the olive trees
Of scant Ilyssus, or lain couched in shade
Among the rocks where Sunium courts the sea.

Pheid. Then longing rose, through many a silent
march,

For one more sight of Pan ; the homely God,
True monarch of the wild and wanton Earth ;
Who holdeth not Olympus half so dear
As hill and vale, and hunt, or dances gay
Of Oreads in the moonlight, while he glides
Tossing his lynx-hide cape among their robes,
And mates the movement of their merry feet
To tuneful pipes about the flowery sward.

Alc. And so thou didst bethink thee at the last,
How he had bidden thee come back, and learn
His worship here ?

Pheid. 'Twas so ; and here I dwell.

Alc. And what hath been thy place among these
folk ?

Pheid. Friend, teacher, comrade, ruler it may be,
But beyond all things, friend. They saw in me,

Maidens, and youths, and old folk, bearing gifts
Of fruits and flowers, and singing choric songs
For joy that it is summer time again.
They will be here anon ; Pan's altar stands
A stone's throw from my door, and we shall hear
Their chaunts, and see their offerings. Stand here.
They form two bands, Maidens and Youths alike,
Each with its leader, and these sing their staves
In Amœbæic fashion ; the old folks
Are grouped together with a single songster.
The Hymns are mine, remember. Hark, they
start.

*(Enter the Villagers. They group themselves in
bands round the Altar of Pan, just outside the
portico of the house, and in view of Pheidippides
and Alcibiades.)*

Song of the Maidens.

First Voice.

Sing, oh sing of the Summer, Maidens,
Summer is ours to be loved and sung,
Summer who, bidding the young be younger,
Well nigh biddeth the old be young.

24 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

Second Voice.

Hail, oh hail to thee, sweet young Mother,
Bride whom Helios holding dear
Helpeth to fold her flowery kerchief
Over the heart of the nursling year.

First Voice.

Happily hears she, while she shapeth
Colour and form in the fruits to be,
Songs of the orchard afar, and farther,
Fishermen singing for hope of the Sea.

Second Voice.

Heareth the Shepherd along the hillside,
Heareth the Milkmaid after the kine,
Housewife busy with pail and cauldron,
Good-man marrying elm to vine.

First Voice.

No less heareth, and hearing loveth
Lowing of soberly wending herds,
Bay of the merry hound, bleat of the wild goat,
Mid-May riot of nesting birds.

Second Voice.

Ay, and the sunset crash in the willows,
Populous home of the swallow and swift,

Nightingales under the thorn brakes waiting
Smiles of the Moon as the grey clouds drift.

First Voice.

Hers are the gay moths mute on the roses,
Gnats at the fountain, flies in the lime,
Grasshoppers flashing a ruby pinion
Over the tufts of the scented thyme.

Second Voice.

Hers are the bee-scouts draining the lily,
Quiet as thieves, of its honied floods,
Noisier cohorts storming the myrtles,
Plunged thigh deep in the cream-white studs.

First Voice.

Well she knoweth the love that sendeth
Heat to the heart of each flower that swells,
Love in the closing of happy clusters
Love in the bending of perfumed bells.

Second Voice.

Love in the plummy wheat-crowns tossing,
Love in the poppy that 'neath them glows,
Love in tendril, and branch, and blossom,
Vine, and apple, and lily, and rose.

26 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

First Voice.

Pomegranate offering red lips, olive
 Saucily shaking her silver sprays,
Aspen, alert as a fawn or leopard,
 Ready for every wind that plays.

Second Voice.

Love of the mead for the streamlet winding,
 Love of the beach for the climbing seas,
Tale of her love to coppice and orchard
 Told in the whispering way of the breeze.

All.

Bird, bee, butterfly, tree, flock, floweret,
 River, or wave, there is nought but lives ;
Liveth, and shareth the glee, the glory,
 Light, heat, love that the Summer gives.

Alc. A graceful song, and a fair company !
Nay, by my Sires, a very fair one ! Mark,
Oh my Pheidippides, yon leading Nymph,
Who sang the strophe, her with golden hair !
I will go down and find some phrase to thank her,
If not for songs that were not made for me,
At least then for her sunny locks which are !

Pheid. Golden hair, golden hair ; nay, nought of
that !

Stay where thou art ; I will not have thee move :
I want no village victims of thy follies.

Alc. [*Laughing.*] Shake not the curb too sharply,
charioteer !

The steed is not for bolting ; what I said,
Was idly meant or meaningless.

Pheid. Nay, boy ;

I know not meaningless, or know too well
The drift of those who mean not. Thank the Gods,
She is betrothed ; and know, my town-bred friend,
I would not give a fig's price for thy life,
Wert thou to look on her with ill intent ;
I say not, work her ill : thy blood would drench
The roadside dust long ere thou cam'st to Argos :
Thy slaves, albeit full-armed, would be vain toys
Among these angry mountain lads of ours :
And I, I could not save thee if I would.

Alc. Peace, peace, old Sir ! I would not risk my
head

For half these pretty hoydens, much less one.
I will reserve myself for safer loves.
My gentle countrywomen, maid and dame,

28 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

Are, thank the Gods, far fairer and more kind !
But, hark ; here come the swains that mate thy
sirens.

Song of the Young Men.

First Voice.

Well have ye sung to the Summer, Maidens ;
Bright as a brook your melody ran ;
Now, albeit in ruder measure,
Sing we ours to the good God Pan.

Second Voice.

Pride of Arcady-loving Hermes,
Son of the High Gods, brother of Man,
We, the children of Earth thy chosen,
Sing for love of thee, good God Pan.

First Voice.

Nought he recks of the proud Olympus,
Icily crowned in the Æther clear,
Hebe's bowls, or the golden baskets,
Far from all that he holdeth dear.

Second Voice.

Nay, for his love is of Arcady's valleys,
Arcady's myriad founts and rills,

Winds that sport with her tossing woodlands,
Clouds that caper about her hills.

First Voice.

Marketh he not in the noons of Winter
Eagles soaring above the snow?
Smileth he not on the moonlit lynxes
Stealing down to the folds below?

Second Voice.

Watcheth the squirrels like little foxes
Over his head in the breeding time
Chase, and chatter, and leap, and nibble
Delicate rind of the beech and lime?

First Voice.

Dreamily hears the wood-bee's droning,
Dreamily nods to the note of the merle,
Down in the dells where alder thickets
Shake to the rivulet's endless purl.

Second Voice.

Sleeps and dreams of the day when Syrinx,
Dreading the clasp of the godlike arms,
Showed, as she ran, to the happy Satyrs
All the fulness of flying charms.

30 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

First Voice.

Fast she fled by the banks of Ladon,
Till in the Marsh of the Silver Meads,
Faded her form and her cry together,
Hushed and hidden among the reeds.

Second Voice.

Long he sought her, and seeking called her,
"Syrinx, Syrinx," about the brake,
"Syrinx, hearest thou?" over the mountain,
"Syrinx, answer!" along the lake.

First Voice.

All too soon to the great Gods prayed she ;
All too soon did they hear her prayer ;
Now she waveth and bendeth ever
One poor crest of the thousands there.

Second Voice.

He, whenever his heart is tender,
Piping alone at the twilight's close,
Dreams that the spirit of Ladon's daughter
Lends its strain to the reed he blows.

First Voice.

Now, for the love of whatever loveth,
Out of his solitudes wanders He,

Fathering all things glad and fruitful,
Ordering all to be blithe and free.

Second Voice.

He too lighteth a young man's fancy,
He too maketh a maiden kind ;
Rouseth the soul of the wild wood, planteth
Love of the hart in the wayward hind.

First Voice.

His the joy in the marriage splendour
Burning on many a wild-bird's crest,
Plume of the loftily-seated heron
Watching his mate on her airy nest.

Second Voice.

Hears he the coo of the harboured turtle,
Welcomes the swallows from over the sea,
Watches the shadows of hares in springtime
Splashing the moonlit dewes of the lea.

All.

Cease we, cease we, the crowd of praises
Shatters the bounds of one poor song !
Love of the stars, the snows, the mountains,
Love of the great streams bounding along ;

No gossip of the women at the fountain,
No pointing of a cruel finger-tip,
With, "Why this dower from yon Athenian?"
Nor would I that the wine-cup loosed some tongue
To jeer at "poor compliant Callicles,"
And so to unsheath his knife, and stain our vale
With bloodshed and dishonour. Sweet young friend,
Thine impulses are swift, and free, and gay,
And generous, as befits an Attic Noble;
But full of peril to thyself and others.
May Zeus preserve, and Pallas give thee wisdom,
As she to young Telemachus of old,
And Artemis to pure Hippolytus.
I own I fear for thee; the more, perchance,
Because e'en now I love thee—But once more,
Listen; the old men have a song to sing.

Song of the Old Men.

Feeble of foot are we, and faint of voice;
Yet will we sing to thee, now these have sung;
We worship thee, we love thee, we rejoice
No less than they, though they be fair and young.

34 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

Oh Pan, our souls are young, and thou dost know
Ah, well dost know, that love is of the soul ;
Worn are thy reeds, and yet the tunes they blow,
Shall keep their freshness while the ages roll.

We have not lost our yearning for the Spring,
Nor sober love for Summer at her height,
With Autumn to her latest charm we cling,
And take our cheer with Winter in her night.

We sit and watch the splendours of the Dawn,
And joy to see the Sun outshine the Moon,
Though prisoners to the homestead and the lawn,
We gaze into th' illimitable Noon.

Hill, plain, glen, river, mountain, all are ours ;
We won them in our youth, and hold them yet ;
Our limbs may fail, but Memory's bright host scours
The past, and bars her portals to regret.

And we can muse in Evening's gathering shade,
And feel no sadness, though the Day be done ;
But trust that Death may waft us, when we fade,
To happy fields beyond the western Sun.

Our life has been full-furnished from its birth ;
Of neither want nor pain we care to tell ;
The beauties and the bounties of thine earth
Cease not for us, we cease, and it is well.

It may be we shall climb thine hill no more ;
And this may be the last song we shall sing ;
This our last gathering at thy Temple door ;
And these poor gifts our latest offering.

Then take them as the thanks of those who die,
And dying bless thee, Friend divine of man
And all things else beneath the boundless sky,
Earth-born, earth-habitant, Arcadian Pan.

Alc. Ah well, good folk, I cannot pity you
Who pity not yourselves.

Pheid. There art thou just.
Pity is not for those who sorrow not,
Having no cause for sorrow ; pity were
For him who pitied them. But see ; they wend,
Their sacrifice achieved, down the hill path,

36 *The Finding of Pheidippides.*

In laughing groups, lasses and lads together ;
And after them their elders soberly——

Alc. And just a little stiffly. But the Sun
Hath passed the South ; I see my people wait me . .
Farewell, my grandsire's friend ! I honour thee,
And would be like thee, if I could : but me,
And such as I—we do not mould ourselves—
Great Athens, and her destiny sublime,
Her noble thirst for empire, learning, wealth,
The arts of Pheidias and Æschylus,
Sophocles, Pindar, young Euripides,
Painting, the Lesbian and Ionic muse,
The stress and turmoil of the Agora,
With war as often as it cares to come,
And till it comes, magnificence, and love,
Olympic chariots, and the covert smile
And blush of maid and matron—one and all,
Beckon me back : and when my youth is spent,
And manhood's ripeness softens toward decay,
I will face Death, nay, give a hand to him,
Laugh, and try Hades ! But to plant me here,
Grow like a pumpkin, swell, turn brown, and rot
On the same dunghill that engendered me——

I was not made for that, nor that for me !

Thou wouldst not tempt me to make trial of it ?

Pheid. Nay, boy ; Pan hath not seen thee, nor
thou Pan.

WATCHES OF THE NIGHT.

THE turmoil and the stress of Day are done ;
Night holds all Nature in a happy swoon,
The Earth hath turned her shoulder to the Sun,
And given her bosom to the restful Moon.

From lane, and farm, and hedgerow, copse, and
brake,
Labour hath ceased to herald her reprieve,
And hushed are all the mingling sounds that make
The comfortable tumult of the eve.

The swifts are silent in the willow bed ;
The caw of homing rooks hath died away ;
And few would guess that round yon grey stone shed
A sparrow sleeps behind each ivy spray.

The owls have ceased to hunt about the wolds,
And scarce by loving ears a sound is heard,
Save coughing of the sheep in misty folds,
Or the chance twitter of some dreaming bird.

The last belated villager, who roused
Discordant protest from the suffering hill,
With snatches of his tavern songs, is housed,
And leaves the tortured air released and still.

The spreading silence seems a sound unfurled,
Whose subtle modulations fill all space
With music, and hold fast the sleeping world
Locked in their vast melodious embrace.

This is the hour when to her worshippers
Night holds apart the curtain of her skies,
As unto one she surely knows for hers
A woman opens her heart's mysteries.

She proffers, and the craving Soul replies,
Feed me, thou bountiful and beauteous Night,
I am consumed with famine, drowned in cries
Of thoughts that hunger for the Infinite.

Thy shades reveal what blinding Day obscures,
And what without them we had never known ;
Hints of ten thousand galaxies are yours,
But hers eclipse, save of the Sun alone.

Without thee unto us had been as nought
The far-spaced comrades of our stately round,
Them hast thou garnered for us in ripe thought,
And sown our guesses through th' unreaped
profound.

Thy grace hath taught us how to grasp and prize
The secret of our origin and theirs,
And touch with feet assured and upward eyes
The first plane of th' illimitable stairs

Where Science mounteth slowly, as beseems
That Muse whose answer must be made on high ;
Albeit at whiles she suffers her rich dreams
To gild the skirts of her austerity.

But, Night, what of the Æther ? What of Him
Before whose breath its earliest tremors grew ?
What of the Voice that through the spaces dim
Pealed forth in undulations vast as new :

And stirred the torpors of primeval cold,
Wherein the lifeless deeps inactive lay,
Till mass from mass, concentring, slowly rolled
Asunder, starting on their destined way.

And Light, Heat, Motion, mighty Modes became
Whereto the million chaunts of change are sung,
Where'er a Star expends its parent flame,
Alone, or in consorted orbit hung.

But yet, from thy vast arc how little won !
Alas, alas for our restricted gaze,
That makes a pin's point of some giant Sun,
A twinkling spark of æther-cleaving rays :

And foils e'en thee ; for still thy darkness fails
To show unnumbered spheres that wait the aid
Of science with fresh optic power t' unveil
Thy regions blank of still unconquered shade.

But we, whose eyes have never swept the range
Of telescopic field thy pleasures share ;
Our station on this hill we would not change
For nightly seats in Equatorial chair.

Content are we to read the written scroll,
And take from lips revered the cosmic law,
To muse and dream, and bid a fasting soul
Feast upon splendours that eyes never saw.

Nor yet shall see, till Space no more be Space,
And dreams no more shall scour it unconfined ;
Or dull Mechanics seize her pride of place
From Spirit, and Mind's products outrange Mind.

Now pardon us who leave thee, gentle Night,
While yet in full possession of thy skies !
Sleep draws down Fancy from thy limpid height,
And weighs upon the lids of wearied eyes.

Farewell ; for us till dawn thy halls are swayed
By flimsier shapes that through the Ivory Bars,
In elfish lightness dance from beam to shade
Beneath thy mild Moon and thy lordly Stars.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

WE stand between the pale stars and the Sun ;
Between the passing Night and dawning
Day ;

What we could say is said, could do is done ;
The Night was ours, Morn waveth us away.

Earth, Sun, Stars, Years and Ages, what are they ?
Atoms of atoms bred and flung aside ;
Each but one pulse of that which beats for aye ;
One grain once rolled by an eternal tide.

And what this mortal sojourn of the Mind ?
From seasons numberless one bloom half blighted ;
A meteor in a moment bright and blind ;
Mid perishable fires a spark half lighted.

Yet, set we not our seals with those who sign
A creed of small contempt for life and man,
And see in well-filled years and souls that shine
An idle flicker and a worthless span.

Contempt? Nay, full contentment to have been
One quartz-grain in the granite of the mountain;
One drop to catch the common noonday sheen,
In bounding waterfall or plenteous fountain.

The crags have crumbled down to lift the plain,
We shared their work of slow and mighty motion;
The river wound and swept to feed the main,
We helped to make the plenishment of ocean.

What clothed the peak, now fattens fruitful vales,
Orchard, and flowering mead, and corn-sheets
waving;
What swelled the seas, spreads vaporous wings
and scales
Fresh heights of air, to fall, far summits laving.

There is no pause, no death, but change, still change ;
Each end that looms is but a new beginning ;
Stones set from verge to verge, from range to range ;
Knots on the thread th' eternal wheels are spinning.

Then, fare thee well, thou Life that we have known ;
Thy bands must break, e'en now we feel them
 slacken ;
We will not shame our souls by making moan,
Nor prate of lights that fail, or clouds that blacken.

We mark thine hours, and taking thus our leave,
Of all thine images but one we borrow ;
Our going is as sleep in summer eve,
Within whose gates we pass to meet thy Morrow.

PAUSANIAS AND CLEONICE,

A FRAGMENT OF HISTORY

DRAMATICALLY

TREATED.

I DEDICATE this Poem to my friend

SIDNEY COLVIN Esq.

Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and Keeper
of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum.

ARGUMENT.

PAUSANIAS, King Regent of Sparta, was the General in command of the Greek army at the battle of Platæa. His success on that occasion upset the moral balance of a brilliant but unstable nature. He began forthwith to develop and indulge qualities and propensities which would have been ridiculous if they had not been at once disgraceful in a Greek leader, antipathetic to Greek simplicity, and dangerous to the Commonwealth. He assumed the imperious airs of a despot, imitated the luxury, the splendour, and even the dress of an Asiatic potentate, and indulged himself in all those forms of wanton licentiousness which are too often associated with uncontrolled power. That his colleagues should have borne so long with him is inexplicable. The climax of his audacity in one direction seems to have been reached during the occupation of Byzantium, in a demand, under threats which her relatives had not the constancy to resist, that Cleonice, the daughter of a conspicuous family of that city, should be handed over to him. His wretched victim only obtained the condition that her surrender should be made at midnight, and that his tent should be kept in darkness upon her arrival. He lived in a constant dread of assassination, and it so happened that stepping forward as she entered, she overturned an unlighted lamp. The crash of its fall aroused Pausanias, who had fallen asleep, and he, imagining himself to be attacked by enemies, seized his sword, and stabbed her. She died, upbraiding him ; and it

was said that he was ever afterwards haunted by hallucinations arising from the fever of unavailing remorse. He tried in vain every known form of expiation, and finally applied to the Necromancers of Heraclea in Arcadia, who evoked the Spirit of Cleonice, with a view to extract from her at once some terms of her pardon, and some indication of his own destiny. He was said partly to have succeeded in the latter object, though the Spirit avowed herself inexorable in her hate and her desire for vengeance. To his other vices Pausanias added the peculiarly Greek failing of political dishonesty. There can be no doubt that, like Themistocles, he had the closest dealings with the Persian Court, and was willing with its assistance to have mounted to the throne of a tributary Greece. His ruin was completed by the disclosures, first, of some among the more prominent of the Spartan Helots, upon whose revolt he had counted, and secondly, of an Argilian slave of his own, who, suspecting treachery to himself, broke the seals of some despatches which he had been charged to carry to Artabazus, and therein discovered not only their treasonable character, but urgent injunctions for his own immediate death. These the outraged envoy handed over to the Spartan Ephori. But the latter, before acting on the double information thus brought before them, contrived to overhear in an interview, for that purpose arranged between Pausanias and the Argilian, the fullest confirmation of the king's guilt from his own lips. On the eve of arrest, the culprit, probably favoured by some friend among the magistracy, took refuge in a building belonging to the shrine of Athene of the Brazen House. The authorities, not daring formally to violate such a sanctuary, bricked up all the entrances to his place of refuge, and there left him to starve to death. To prevent the pollution of the holy place, he was carried out into the open air just as he was on the point of expiring, and so he died.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PAUSANIAS, *King Regent of Sparta.*

CLEONICE, *a Byzantine Maiden.*

The Father }
The Mother } *of Cleonice.*
The Brother }
The Sisters }

A Priestess at Heraclea.

ZENOPHILE, *a female slave of Pausanias.*

Two Ephori of Sparta.

AGATHIAS, *a slave and friend of Pausanias.*

SUPERNATURAL PERSONAGES.

The God HERMES.

A Chorus of Dreams.

The Phantom of CLEONICE.

PAUSANIAS AND CLEONICE.

SCENE I.

IN A BYZANTINE NOBLE'S HOUSE.

(*Cleonice and her Family.*)

Mother.

AND will the tyrant not repent himself
Of his unspeakable demand?

Father.

Alas,

I offered him house, lands, to half our substance ;
And more, if that would free us ; but in vain ;
He had one only answer, " Sir, your daughter
Send her to me, or else ye go forthwith
Neath trusty escort to the Persian king,
With such a tale, as told, for thee shall mean
Tortures and death, and for thy women all
A fate far worse than that which makes thee plead
For Cleonice alone."

Mother. Alas, how long
The respite he allows us ?

Father. Till to-night.

Mother. Oh would the Gods permitted me, that I,
Like to Alcestis for Admetus' life,
Might give my own, and free you all ! My child,
Ah me, my child, why wast thou beautiful,
To tempt him thus ?

Cleonice. Reproach me not, my mother,
Nor prate of tempting him.

Father. Ye know, ye Heavens,
Thou Earth, and you, ye Gods of Heaven and Hell,
How I would die for her, but that my death
Would leave wife, house, and her, but barer yet
Unto this spoiling recreant.

Cleon. Too late
Were now the sacrifice ; yet plain it is
That hadst thou died, his threat had died with thee
Of handing thee denounced unto the Mede.
But words are vain.

Brother. Ay, vain ; and we are six,
And thou but one. Who knoweth if the Spartan
May wed thee yet, and thou, as she of old,
That same restored Alcestis whom ye name,

Lived out her life within her husband's home,
May'st reign a happy Queen in Lacedæmon.

Cleon. Boy, cease with thine Alcestis and thy
Queen!

Ye all know well there are no crowns for me!
Alcestis did but die; and death were nothing
To that whereto I go; this too ye know;
And yet ye send me thither, in the scare
Of threats, which he who threatens might still fear
To bring to the birth of action. Let me pass.
Would my death save you, I had slain myself.
Unhand me, mother! Let me pass, I say!
No kisses, no farewells; back, all of you!
This night is none of farewell, but ill fare.
Were it for death or bridal, I had left you
Weeping and being wept for; as things are
I loathe these shows of sorrow. What are tears?
Ye shed them, but ye would not have them stay me.
My sister, lift thine eyes, and list to me!
I charge thee, cling to thy virginity;
Thou, too, may'st have to buy this house its freedom.
'Tis done; I have no father, mother, kin.
Love, grief, are dead within me; I but leave
Some folk behind me who would save themselves

Out of my ruin. Farewells, weeping, kisses !
Ye might kiss Cleonice, but not me ;
Or weep for Cleonice, not for me.
Take leave of Cleonice, not of me.
I am not Cleonice, she is dead.
And in her place a Fury breatheth here
Whose heart-beats are of hate alone. Beware !
These fingers are as Harpies' claws, and ache
To tear and strangle you before I go.
Stand back ; and let me pass into the night.
Into the night ; ye Gods, what means the night !

[*Exit.*

SCENE II.

IN THE OUTER TENT OF PAUSANIAS.

(*Pausanias and a Woman Slave.*)

Pausanias.

IS all well ordered? Are the Tyrian silks
Disposed on couch and settle? The gold cups,
And basons, jewel caskets, flower vases,
Set to a maiden's fancy? Looks the tent
Meet for a lady's welcome, fit to take
Her eyes by storm when once they waken on it?

Slave. Oh King, were she a Princess born and
nursed

In splendour, yet she would be dazed with thine.

Paus. She is a Princess; that remember thou;
And thou her slave, that too remember thou.

Slave. Am I not thine, and should I not be hers?
[*Aside.*] Have I not known the slavery of gold cups,
Sidonian broideries, bracelets, crowns and kisses,

As now of earthen vessels, with mean tasks,
 Coarse clothes, and sterner handling ! So shall she ;
 Or else the stony heart within yon breast
 Hath changed its texture strangely.

[*Aloud.*] All is done ;

May I retire ?

Paus. Ay, good Zenophile ;

Sleep sound. Art thou well lodged ?

Slave. Ay ; well enough.

Paus. Farewell, then.

Slave. Fare thee well, oh King. [*Exit.*

Paus. [*Alone.*] 'Tis strange :

This is the first time that my will fulfilled
 Brings me no pleasure : am I sated, cold ?
 Hath mysense slackened ? Grows mysoul perchance
 Self-cramping, craven-tender ? Would remorse,
 Like a night spoiler, steal on waning power
 To make resolve its plunder ? The change were
 Too vast, too sudden ; but an hour ago
 I was aflame with waiting, now I sit
 Pulseless, nay worse than pulseless ; like a pain
 That starts half-felt, something within me stirs
 Akin to fear or scruple ; and the words
 " Send the girl home again " beset my brain

Like tremors of the wind on a lake's surface.

'T may be I am but weary ; for to-day

Too many hours have I gone through in strife

With wily Gongylus, behind whom works

That new-come Satrap of Daskylium.

Why should I pause ? What fear ? What harm can
 come ?

Her parents send her, she herself hath made

Her own conditions of arrival. What

Can signify one flower the more in that

Which grows to a great nosegay ? And this last

Plucked with so much of nicety withal

In my full midsummer of power. Some gift

Of lands or rank shall pacify her kin ;

And for herself—let me not mock myself !

I need an hour's repose, and 'tis as far

From now till midnight : I will light no lamp ;

She bargained for the dark ; the merest touch

Will wake me ; threatened men like me sleep light ;

And in her sweet intrusion I await

A menace worth a kingdom ! Come then, Sleep ;

Reign thou till Cleonice's reign begins.

[*He lies down.*]

SCENE III.

IN THE OPEN AIR OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF
BYZANTIUM.

*(Time, midnight. A group of Spartan Soldiers.
The tent of Pausanias in the background.)*

Enter Cleonice.

Cleonice.

SO go I forth out of my father's house,
With moon and stars to witness how I go,
And where ; the victim of a fate so dire,
A pact so base, that surely never yet
Hath either found a fellow that could stamp
A like brand on the records of the world.
Women have suffered ravishment ere this,
And in the fearful settlements of war
Have lost love, innocence, and princely homes,
And learned to lower heads, that once were proud,

neet the loathsome uses of the slave.
I was Cassandra, such Andromache,
I Helen's self ; so died Polyxena,
I virgin offering to Pelides' shade ;
I so a thousand others have faced ruin.
I none, none, none, in the long flight of time,
I t forth as I from her paternal hearth,
I lly abandoned by her coward kin,
I o might have died to save her, but love better
I buy a shameful ease out of her shame,
I oth amaze me, knowing this and them,
I filled with loathing of them, as I am,
I t yet my will is firm to go, my limbs
I staunch to carry me. Unveiled I bear
I r light, ye Moon and Stars ; look well, and answer,
I ye not wonder at me, Moon and Stars ?
I ye shine down, as though I lay asleep
I athing unruffled airs of peace and home ;
I so will shine, through all those murderous hours
I ust endure ; and if I live, and face
I ther midnight, ye will shine again
I elnched, unpitying. Who will pity me ?
I my cold recreant father who could sell me ;
I my weak mother who could let me go ;

Nor my base brother with his "We are six,
 And she but one." Self love knows less of pity
 Than Hate itself; Hate that makes mock of all,
 As I do now. Ah me, I wellnigh laugh
 As I stand here, to think how presently,
 Two, three days hence perchance, and not for long,
 Ye women of light-tongued Byzantium,
 As ye stand loitering with your water-urns,
 Or spread your new-washed purple on the mead,
 Matrons and maids, ye will outstay the Noon
 In broidering with your words this tale of mine.
 And some will even weep, but more will laugh,
 And on their fingers tell the gifts wherewith
 Pausanias hath consoled the ruined maid.
 Fools all, both those who weep, and those who sneer,
 And nought alike to me.

[*To a Soldier who approaches, and veiling
 herself.*

And who art thou?

Soldier. Lady, one sent by King Pausanias
 To bring fair Cleonice on her way.

Cleon. Lead on then, I shall follow thee.

Soldier. Fair dame,
 My orders were to screen thee in our band,

Lest anyone should spy thee, or aught harm thee.

Cleon. Or, lest I fled ; had I intended flight,
I had not now been here ; for lesser perils,
They are now nought to me. Therefore, lead on.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

INSIDE THE OUTER TENT OF PAUSANIAS.

*(Pausanias sleeping uneasily.)**Chorus of Dreams.**First Voice.*

FAR o'er the western foam,
 Our pinions charged with gifts of peace or fear,
 Out of the shadow of our ocean home
 We come to hold our nightly vigils here

Above the infant's cot
 Light-winged we sport in fancies half revealed,
 And love to mark the smiles remembered not
 Play o'er its dimpled cheek and lips unsealed.

And o'er the maiden's bed
 We hover while she dwells in hours to be,
 Bid her weave garlands for her own fair head,
 And waft her forth to sail love's golden sea.

The outworn monarch's brow
Still throbbing with a crown's perplexities,
As cool foam bathes a good ship's labouring prow,
We soothe with rippling echoes of lost ease.

Where 'neath the stars he lies
We charm the sleeping warrior till he hears
His lone wife singing as her shuttle flies,
Or laughing with his child behind her tears.

Second Voice.

But not alone to those
Whom the Great Gods in love compassionate
Would dower with fleeting joys and brief repose
Have we flown hither through the Ivory Gate.

Some with intent malign,
Through the gaunt Portals of austerer Horn,
Dispensers of the punishment divine,
Vex the mute air from midnight unto morn.

Mark well this sleeper here
His quivering eyelids, brows and temples wet
With anguish, lips held wide apart by fear
And fingers clutching at the coverlet.

Traitor and tyrant grown,
The wreck of his own lightness, lust, and greed,
He plots to sit a slave upon a throne
The hireling and the henchman of the Mede.

Third Voice.

He thought in our despite
To force sweet slumber unto uses ill,
And called upon our gentle mother Night
To whet the dull edge of his evil will.

But ere he laid him down
We heard our Mother's whisper and we flew,
And from her starry forehead brushed the frown
With mocking ease when we her bidding knew.

No whit more easily
Her own light breezes fan the mists away
That veil her moon, when first she takes the sky
From pale-eyed Hours still fretting for the Day.

Behold him, how he lies
Writhing for dread of vengeance long delayed,
And gasps and raves of seizure and surprise,
And plucks with fevered hand his ready blade.

[*Cleonice parts the tent curtains.*]

But, Sisters mine, I fear
Lest with some horror new this hour be fraught,
Mark well her fateful eyes who cometh here ;
Oh Night, Night, Night, what evil hast thou
wrought ?

*[As Cleonice steps forward, she overturns in
the dark an unlighted lamp, which falls
with a crash.*

Paus. *[Waking and seizing his sword.]* What !
Treason ? Who betrays me ? Nay, not yet !
Not yet, I say, nor so, Pausanias falls !
Die, traitor, robber, or whate'er thou art !

[He stabs Cleonice, who shrieks, and falls.
Ah Gods and Furies all ! Without there ! Torches !
'Twas she, and I have slain her ! Cleonice !
Where liest thou, where liest thou ? Light, light !
Speak, maiden, but one word to show thou livest.
By every God, I swear I saw thee not,
But dreamed of treason and surprise, and linked
That noise thou mad'st on entering to my dream.
Without there ! Quick, bring torches for your lives !
[Enter attendants bearing torches.
Ah, there thou liest, and smitten through that
breast

I longed to make my pillow.

[*He moves forward as if to raise her.*

Cleon.

Touch me not !

I would descend untainted to the Shades.

Saved, saved ; but not, thou murderer, by thee !

'Twas not thy will that spared me, but the Fates,

More kindly than I deemed.

[*He once more makes as if he would raise her.*

Away, I say !

Let me die unpolluted by thy fingers.

Oh stained by double dyes of lust and murder,

Live on, accursed : oh, let him live, ye Gods !

Long, long ; so that my ghost may follow him,

Leagued with the Furies over land and sea ;

To phrenzy lash him now, now strike him down

Until he quake with palsy like a rush,

For this his pair of crimes wrought and unwrought.

I would not have him die, lest death absolved him.

Paus. Ah maiden, hear me !

Cleon. [*Faintly.*]

Silence ; let me die.

[*She dies.*

SCENE V.

AT THE ORACLE OF THE NECROMANCERS OF
HERACLEA IN ARCADIA.

Pausanias. [Alone.]

MY fate is closing in on me ; I need
No words of a convulsed and foaming hag,
Stung by her God, or raving self-inflamed,
To tell me this : converging perils roll
And menace me, like flocks of hungry clouds
That climb and gather up a mountain flank,
To glut themselves with thunder, and then fall.
Well ; let all break on me ; I am resigned,
And weary somewhat, and can own that, judged
By laws which strong men masterfully break,
And of high purpose, and the weak transgress
Of none, but of mere weakness, I have sown
Ruin, and reap it, and with ruin, death.

Would I knew more? What more is there to know?
They can but tell me how I am to die,
And that is little worth. What matters it?
A sword-thrust, or a poison-bowl, or even
The pressure of a rope about my throat—
Though men may loathe the last—or to be hurled,
Like Sciron, from some summit, and to swoon
Midway, ere I could reach the waiting waves.
These are but Death's apparel; for himself
I neither seek nor fear him, let him come.

[*After a pause.*]

Of all such deeds as for the doer cleave
Life into epochs, I have wrought but one
Whereof I do repent me; but that one,
Unwitting as abhorred, hath dazed my soul,
Blasted and blighted it, as eyes struck blind
By lightning; it hath wrecked my mastery
Of plot and project; shattered my resolve;
Bereft me of the longing, hope, and will,
And dominant passion for high-seated power,
That were my being; it hath beat me down,
And made a Helot of me, a mere slave
To live and bear; my days have sunk to be
Stages in one long march of agony;

My nights vain halts, of vigil or of sleep,
Hemmed round by terror-laden silences,
That press about my soul like dungeon walls,
And madden more than shriek or curse, or howl
Of banded Furies raging for revenge. [*He pauses.*
Revenge—and is it hers? Whose if not hers?
And why e'en hers? I plead with mine own soul;
Was it a deed done beyond pale of pardon?
I slew her; but I loved her; and I know,
Though she came late into my life, I loved
None else before her. Were it not enough
To bear the famine of lost love, to gasp
With each quick pulse of recollected horror,
As day by day before me sweep undimmed
Those moments which have linked me to the damned,
But that her threatening eyes should ever gleam
Out of the gloom that wraps my solitude,
Implacable and fiery, fed with flames
Of hate, such hate as Hades cannot quell;
A hate that will not hearken to remorse
Nor melt before despair; whose appetite
My ruin will leave ravenous, perchance
Not e'en my death appease. For who can tell
How far a pallid Ghost, untamed by time,

With gaping breast, and murder's ghastly shows,
 May follow me upbraiding through the Shades,
 Insatiate that my misery should pay
 Eternal tribute to her tyrannous claim
 For that one unpremeditated wrong.

[*Enter a Priestess.*

Priestess. Sir, King, it is the hour when suppliants
 fain

To commune with the spirits of the dead,
 And share that knowledge which their under-world
 Hath of the things to come in this, must aid
 With offerings due the mightier potency
 Of spells entrusted unto us, who keep
 These holy groves, and this dark nameless shrine
 Where never yet the light of sun or moon
 Or any star hath entered. Take yon lamp;
 'Twill guide thy feet up to the altar steps;
 There shalt thou find all that befitteth thee
 To offer to the Powers that reign below:
 A bowl of pure milk from a heifer fed
 In these our virgin meadows, which till now
 Scythe hath not swept, nor any foot hath pressed
 Save of our saintly maidens; honey, wrought
 By bees which haunt our lawns alone, and drain

Their sweets of lime and lily, rose and thyme,
And plants diverse that grace our solitudes :
A jar of lustral water from a spring
Untainted waits thee ; and a cup that brims
With fresh-drawn juice of purple bunches, plucked
From their wild mother-vine, that never knew
The shears or tendance of a husbandman :
And there too stands a flask of fragrant oil
Crushed from the dark fruit of that tree benign
Whose crown of silver foliage never fails,
The olive ; and with these are clustered blooms
Of many-hued and many-scented flowers,
The offspring of this bounteous plot of earth,
Which the Great Mother loves to clothe and deck
Through all the seasons. These accustomed gifts
Shalt thou in order on the shrine bestow ;
Then backward pace, and wait in silence here.
Ours be it then to urge our wonted prayer.

*[Pausanias, as bidden, advances to the altar,
places the gifts on it, and then retires.]*

Invocation.

Aidoneus, dweller in the gloom
Whereto the deep night's deepest shade

Is as the glow of summer eve,
Thou art the warden of each tomb
Wherein a mortal's bones are laid
And only by thy sovereign leave
A soul may cross that dusky bourne
Which laves the shores of thy domain,
And marks the borders of thy power ;
We pray for one a brief return,
One whom yon suppliant would detain
In conference for a single hour ;
Aidoneus, oh Aidoneus, hear,
And bid the summoned Shade appear !

She comes not yet ; great Mother Earth,
Is it thy jealous bosom's hold
That keeps her in a locked embrace ?
Oh, grudge her not this second birth,
But let thy gracious arms unfold,
And spare her for a little space.
Perchance, as thine own icy veins
Grow softer to the sighs of spring,
And fiery-tempered summer's heat,
Is tender after tearful rains,
So she from her long sojourning

Beneath thy breast so calm and sweet,
Hath learned the graces that abate
The fires of Rage and frosts of Hate.

Not yet she comes ; oh, Maia's son,
Bright-sandalled Herald of the Gods,
Helper of all in woe or fear,
Oh help us now, thou dauntless one ;
And soon as dark Aidoneus nods
His symbol of assent severe,
Imperious take her struggling hand,
And as thou leddest her before
Reluctant underneath the Night,
Subdue her will to thy command,
And force her eyes unsealed once more
To open on the pale Moon's light :
Aidoneus, Hermes, Earth, Dread Three,
Let not our call unanswered be !

[As the song ceases, the Phantom of Cleonice appears standing in front of the Altar.]

Priestess. Oh, King, behold her. She is free to stay
But one short hour ; make thou thy quest of her.

Paus. Cleonice, oh Cleonice ! It is she !

Phantom. Call me not Cleonice ; she is dead ;
Nay, worse than dead, if it be worse to be
As though she never were ; she passed from Earth
Ere thou didst stab me, and hath left no Shade ;
Went, as a cloud goes without wind, dissolved
Into the elements. I stand instead,
The Ghost of thine own child ; a Monster bred
Of a most loathsome Pair ; thy cruel lust
Was my begetter, and my parents' shame
The harlot that did bear me. Ay, ye made me
Among you a new Portent, fierce and strange,
A Dæmon, a fourth Fury, what thou wilt :
A being to whom 'tis life to haunt thy steps,
Rend thee with horror, hound thee to that goal
Where ruin and death await thee. Such am I ;
I feed on wrath and vengeance ; when thou diest
I shall die too, pine, fade for want of thee.
Oh, I shall cling to thee ; thou wouldst possess me ;
Well, I am thine, not to be driven off
When thou hast wearied of me. For thy quest,
I know it ; take thine answer : I have nought
That thou shouldst ask to tell thee of, save this ;
That thou shalt die, lone, save for me, despised,
Deserted, starved, betraying and betrayed ;

Loathed, even by thy Mother, as I died
Loathing my own. Such is the fate that waits thee;
Hear it, and with it hear my deathless curse,
The curse as of a Fury, breathed in flames.

May I depart? [*To the Priestess.*]

Paus. Nay, Spirit, thou shalt hear me,
Albeit I have summoned thee in vain!

I loved thee when I slew thee. 'Twas a dream
Sent by some hostile God, e'en Zeus perchance,
In recompense of other deeds of mine,
And reckless of thy death, or it may be,
To save thee—as thy cry was—by thy death,
That raised my witless and distempered hand
In that rash blow. Maiden, I loved thee well;
And should have loved thee better day by day;
I should have grown to thee, and thou to me;
Thou shouldst have been my Queen, when I was
King

By title greater than the puny name
Mine own State gave me. Ah, believe me, Maid,
I would have carried thee in pride to Sparta,
And thence, from a joint throne of love and power,
When I had baffled Greece and tricked the Mede,
Together had we reigned o'er half the world.

Phantom. Thou liest, traitor to thy land and me !
 These were fit pleas for some half-witted girl
 To grow too tender over ; but to me
 'Tis a fool's answer ! Cease ; the dead know all.
 Give o'er, and let me go.

Paus. And is this all ?
 Hast thou no mercy ? Art thou so transformed
 That ruin and remorse and misery
 Are nought to thee ?

Phantom. Ay, nought, nought, nought !
 I laugh at all, at them and thee and me.

Paus. Then must it be that thou wast ever thus,
 A fury from thy birth ; with heart of bronze,
 That wrong hath heated but not changed. No more !
 Henceforth I fling off pity and remorse ;
 And take my ruin but as one who failed
 To compass empire. Since, for thee and me,
 A new light breaks upon me ; I see clear.
 It was no delicate Byzantine maid
 I plotted for, but one without a soul,
 Whose ruin was no crime.

Phantom. No, traitor, no !
 Not thus the easy guile of thy false thought
 Shall work thee self acquittal. 'Tis not so :

They used to call me gentle ; many loved me,
Birds, beasts, and men ; doves floated down to feed
Out of these hands and cluster on these shoulders ;
And calves came trotting round me in the meads.
The wretched forced a smile to greet me with,
And poor, to whom life brought no blessing, found
Blessings for me, where'er I walked among them.
Such was I, till thou, Monster, in thy lust
Cast baleful eyes on me, and made that pact,
Which maddens still, with my most shameful kin ;
Kin now no more, nor e'er again to be,
E'en though my only harbour from them were
A hidden refuge in that nethermost Hell,
Where no light is, and dwell the damned and dumb,
Who see not, hear not, but lie lone for ever,
Motionless in eternal solitude.

Priestess. Spirit, thine hour hath come ; to keep
thee here

Beyond th' allotted moments, were t' imperil
Ourselves with the dread Powers who sent thee here.
Thou art dismissed. [*The Phantom vanishes.*

For thee, unhappy King,
Thy fate and the rich gifts thou hast bestowed,
Alike bespeak our hospitality.

Outside the grove a chamber is prepared
With bread and meats and wine : thy couch is
spread,

And all things ordered that beseem thy state.

'Twere fit that we retired : farewell.

Paus.

Farewell. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

A BUILDING WITHIN THE SACRED PRECINCT OF
THE SHRINE OF POSEIDON AT TÆNARUS.

(Two Spartan Ephors and the Slave Agathias.)

First Ephor.

IS all well planned? Will he be here to-night?

Slave. I looked for him at sundown.

Second Ephor.

Art thou armed?

He hath grown desperate ; he was ever prone
To strike on a suspicion ; thou thyself
Wast with him when, set raving by a dream,
He stabbed that maiden of Byzantium.
Beware then, lest a sudden dagger-thrust
Surprise thee and foil us.

Slave. [*Showing a dagger and a hidden breast-plate.*]

Fear not, my Lords :

E'en if the terror of these holy places

Withhold him not, I warrant me, the blood
 That stained their sanctuary were his, not mine.
 But go, conceal yourselves ; e'en now methought
 I heard a footstep. On your lives be still.

[*Exeunt Ephors.*

Paus. [*Entering.*] Agathias, art thou here ?

Slave. [*Coming from behind a pillar.*] Behold
 me, King !

Paus. My time is short ; tell me without delay,
 Why thou hast taken sanctuary ? I deemed thee
 Far on thy voyage to Asia.

Slave. Royal friend—

For we two have been friends, as we both know—
 I will be brief with thee : thou best canst tell
 How many messengers have passed between
 The Satrap Artabazus and thyself :
 I have known ten. Well, when thou gavest me
 Those letters, with large promise of reward,
 Upon their safe deliverance in Asia,
 Some favouring God whispered into mine ear,
 “ Agathias, ere thou step on shipboard, pause,
 And ask thyself, where are those ten thou knewest,
 —With more, perchance, who in their turn have
 borne

Letters from thy Pausanias to the Mede—
Didst ever see one who came back again?
Consider, good Agathias.” I did so ;
And deemed it better to commit myself
To his good keeping who commands the sea
Than to the sea itself.

Paus. But what thy fear?

Slave. First, that some common accident befell
Each bearer of a letter, some mischance
Bred of a trifle somewhere in its writing,
That bought the silence of their several tongues
With a slit throat. And secondly, I thought
My being here would bring thee hither too,
So that thou might'st explain how none of those
Ever came home.

Paus. Agathias, my old friend,
Why didst thou doubt me? Have I not been true,
Loving, and lavish with thee? Why not speak?
Why peril all in this delay? Mere chance,
A midday stroll into the market place,
A passing Ephor's gossip, let me know
That my Agathias was a suppliant
Before the shrine at Tænarus. On the word
I hasted hither. Let me tell thee all.

Great schemes of State are coming to the birth
Between me and the Mede; their argument
Hath needed interchange and close debate
Of view, intent, mode, scruple, and demand,
Over long months and years : after such service
It had been fatal that a messenger
Should live to blab—in treason or his cups—
“ I went ’twixt Susa and Byzantium
With letters of Pausanias and the Mede : ”
Therefore each died. But now the scheme is ripe,
And I may use an honoured trusty friend
To share its fulness with me, help me reap
My harvest sown so long, so long of growth,
And sit—well—sit hard by the throne of Greece.
Come forth then, I beseech thee ; the ship waits ;
I will conduct thee to the shore.

Slave.

Not yet ;

There is some little left : I do believe
The motive and the manner of those deaths,
Mainly that I made free to learn myself
Thy mandate for my own. I broke thy seals.
Not meaning to be false ; nay sneer not, friend—
Unless I found thee false. I had prepared
A counterfeit ; had they proved innocent,

I had re-sealed the missives, and gone on.
What need to tell thee ! Good Pausanias,
No voyages for me on thy behalf ;
A shorter, safer land route carries me
Unto the Spartan Ephors.

Paus. Think'st thou, fool,

A slave shall baulk a Spartan King !

[*He strikes at him with a dagger, which
breaks against the hidden cuirass.*

Slave. [*Laughing.*] Slave ! King !

Mere words ! The Slave mocks, and the King—
well—trembles.

Didst think that with this packet in my gown,
I should not be beforehand with thee ! Ho !
Within there ! Ruffian hands would violate
Poseidon's sanctuary ; would murder me,
Poseidon's suppliant ; help, help, I say !

[*Pausanias rushes out. The Ephors and
some Priests enter by another door.*

[*To the Ephors.*] Need ye aught further ?

First Ephor. Nay, nay. Reverend men,

[*To the Priests.*

Ask nothing, we beseech you ; nor breathe word
Of this ; great issues on your silence hang.

Hast thou the letters, brave Argilian?

Slave. Ay, safe beneath the good bronze, whence
his dagger

Flew back in shivers.

Second Ephor. Quick, let us begone.

Oh Priests, your suppliant is safe with us ;

We sent him hither. Haste to Sparta, we ;

The traitor will outstrip us, as it is ;

We must not give him time to raise the Helots.

It may be they are armed already. Come ! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VII.

A BUILDING ATTACHED TO THE SANCTUARY OF
ATHENE OF THE BRAZEN HOUSE AT SPARTA.

(Pausanias lying on a rude bed.)

Pausanias.

'TIS nearly midnight, for the full Moon rides
High in the South ; fair Orb, thou art as near
Thy setting as Pausanias his death ;
Not a jot nearer ; six more measured hours,
And thou wilt see the Sun ; and in as few
I sink to Hades ; my dull eyes shall cease
To fix thy failing beams e'en ere they fail.
The words of Cleonice are fulfilled :
I do die lone, and should she come not still,
E'en quit of her : Despised ? Well, so are all
Who fail : Deserted ? Yes, again ;
So are all those who fall : Betrayed, and starved,
And loathed by mine own Mother, whom I heard

Commending those who built these portals up.

I loathe her not, as Cleonice hers.

[*After a pause.*]

Since I am doomed to die, I thank the Gods

For this my way of death ; no churl hath laid

A hand upon Pausanias, I die

A King whom none hath dared to touch, the guest

Of great Athene of the Brazen House ;

And Sparta watches in respectful awe

The ebbing of the life it dreads to take :

Such death is worthy of the Agidæ ;

No violence, no blood, calm, solitary,

Unvexed, with none to wail, none to exult ;

And—those first hours of thirst and craving gone—

No pain : 'twere such a death as I had chosen ;

To pass, as the day passes into night.

[*He pauses again.*]

Those eyes have ceased to haunt me, fear is dead

Of capture or attack ; no fevered dreams,

Or palsied vigils ; ever and anon

Sleep steals upon me, as it doth e'en now.

[*He sleeps. Enter the ghost of Cleonice.*]

Ghost. [*After watching awhile.*] He sleeps, but

is not dead ; yet waketh not,

As once when I drew near ; his brows are calm,
His lips set in repose, his breathings faint,
But all untroubled. Where are you, ye Dreams,
My comrades in revenge, who once beset him,
And roused him from your tortures to behold
Mine eyeballs glaring on him in the gloom ?
Once more, once more, I pray you, gentle Dreams,
Flit round him, bid him sweat, and writhe, and start,
And leap up shivering to fall back again ;
Ah, grant me one more waking, but one more,
Ere he go hence, and be for ever free !
My presence cannot rouse him.

[*Enter Hermes.*

Hermes.

Maid, forbear !

The hand of Death is on him ; I am here
Charged with my wonted office, to conduct
His spirit to the Shades. I suffer not
Or Ghost or Dream to torture those on whom
My wand is laid. Stand back, and let him die.

Ghost. And must my vengeance die ?

Hermes.

Ay, and thy hate.

'Tis time that thou wert sated ; e'en the Gods
Lay their spent vengeance on the knees of Time ;
And what are men, that they should proudly claim

Eternity for mortal wrath, and set
The value of their puny wrongs so high !
Return thou to thine under-world, and there
Rest, and resume thy gentleness ; put off
Thy long disfigurement of rage and hate ;
Bewail, as well thou may'st, thy life cut short,
Thy shattered hopes of wedlock, children, home,
Lost sunlight, and the loveliness of earth,
Birds singing, and the sight of flocks and herds,
With all the changing pageant of the years,
And Death made feebly welcome at the close.
None knoweth when he setteth forth with Life
Where Lifeshall lead him ; give thine hands to Death.
And giving, make thy peace with Fate and Man ;
So shalt thou find thy dwelling in the Shades
More worthy than to wander up and down
A world that hath no longer place for thee,
Weeps not thy loss, nor broods over thy wrongs ;
And learn that converse with the gentle Dead
Is easier than the ravings of lone hate,
And resignation sweeter than revenge.
So go : Eurydice the well-beloved,
Whom I twice brought there ; mild Polyxena,
Slain to revenge her brother's traitorous shaft

Which drank her lover's life on Hymen's steps ;
Innocent Glauce, slaughtered by a hate
Twin sister to thine own, and all as fierce ;
Antigone, long faithful sufferer,
Last victim of the curse of Pelops' line ;
And with these, goodly youths, who perished young ;
Atys, whom sad Adrastus, sport of fate,
Unwitting slew ; the pure Hippolytus,
O'ertaken by his father's reckless prayer ;
And Hector's blameless boy, Astyanax,
Whom fierce Pelides' son, insatiate
Of vengeance for Patroclus thrice avenged,
Hurled from the flaming heights of Ilion.
All these, and more, a goodly company,
Await thy coming in the Happy Fields.
Away, delay not ; leave this Soul to me.

Ghost. But shall he suffer nought for his ill deeds?

Hermes. Ask not the servant of the Mighty Gods
Of that which it concerns not thee to know,
Nor him to tell. Resume, I say once more,
Thy gentleness ; leave sentence unto those
Who do apportion doom. This man hath borne
Much of that pain which purgeth.

Ghost. [*Slowly.*]

I relent.

How pale he looks, I ne'er saw aught so pale ;
 This is the first time I have looked on death :
 A little more, and I should pity him.

Hermes. Nay, but I know that thou dost pity him ;
 'Tis well for him, and better still for thee ;
 For pardon is the salve of souls that grant it.
 But haste, away ! Men break the barriers
 Wherewith they blocked these doors, lest he die here
 And so Athene's wrath should fall on them.

[*The Ghost departs.*]

Paus. [*Faintly.*] Was it a dream, or did I see
 her here

Bending above my head, with all the hate
 Gone from her eyes, and in its place a light
 Of tenderness and pity ? Dream or none,
 My soul is fanned as by the wings of Peace,
 And I am ten times readier to die.

[*Enter the Ephors with their assistants to
 remove him.*]

A VIGIL.

A VIGIL.

WARDERS of summer night
Watching for dawn,

Presences hallowing

Woodland and lawn,

Feel my soul cry to thee,

“ Why hast thou gone from me,

Why hast thou gone ? ”

Voices untellable,

Mute save to me,

Make the air sweet with ruth ;

Hill, stream, and lea,

Birds half awakened, all

Answer my spirit call ;

Nought comes from thee.

Nay more, the pine tops moan

“ Why seek him here ? ”

And surlier night-winds chide

“ Make us not drear ;

Our songs shall not be sighs
O'er any soul that dies,
 However dear.

“Petal by petal, see,
 Flower buds unfold,
Petal by petal each
 Falls on the mould ;
He lies, as thou shalt lie,
Deaf to love's feeble cry,
 When thou art cold.”

DAWN.

THE flame of my lamp is low,
The stones of my hearth are cold,
And gay young lights of the morning grow
On the line of the Eastern Wold.

As a tune in the distance dead,
As a lover that falleth away,
The wave of the sea that she loves hath fled
From the breast of the weeping bay.

Ere long shall the warm hill-side
Laugh back at the laughing Noon,
And the whispering lips of the truant tide
Breathe over the sands as soon.

But alas for the heart left bare
By a tide that shall never turn,
And the desolate eyes that must pine and stare
At an East that will never burn.

L'INFERNO. CANTOS I.—IV.

L'INFERNO.

CANTO I.

MIDWAY upon the journey of our life,
I did recall myself, to find my path
Lost in the tangles of a darksome wood.
Ah me, how hard it is to tell what like
Were those wild thickets, rough, impenetrable,
The very thought whereof renews my fear.
Such bitterness it hath that Death itself
Were scarce more bitter ; yet, that I may treat
Of good found in them, I am fain to speak
Of sights diverse that I encountered there.

I cannot well recall mine entrance thither,
So fully was I holden as of sleep,
When first I wandered from the rightful way ;
But soon I reached the foot of a high Hill
Which rose where that Gorge ended which had
pierced

My heart with dread, and lifting up mine eyes
I saw its topmost shoulders, even then
Clothed in that Planet's rays which doth direct
All rightly by whatever paths they come.
Then somewhat was the terror quieted,
That through a night of such continued pain
Had troubled all the deep pools of my heart.
And like to one who, with spent breath, hath clomb
From out the ocean to the shore, and turns
To watch awestruck those waters perilous,
So did my soul, and still as if in flight,
Turn backward glances on that region, whence
No men who stayed therein, ere passed alive.

After brief space, and when my weary limbs
Had ta'en repose along that lone hill-side,
In such wise did I start upon my way,
That ever was my firmer foot the lower.
When, lo, ere yet the slope had well begun,
A Leopard, light and lithe exceedingly,
Clad in a spotted coat, which face to face
Did front me with persistence, and so blocked
Mine onward path, that many a time I turned
Half minded to retrace my steps. The hour
Was of the early morning, and the Sun

Was mounting up among those stars which made
His company, what time the Love Divine
First into motion called those beauteous things.
So that the time and the sweet season, gave
Fair cause for confidence, as touching him
That gaily-coated Beast;¹ yet none so much
But that the aspect of a Lion, now
Appearing in the way, renewed my fear.
He made as he would come at me amain,
With head uplifted, and with famine's rage ;
The very air did seem to quake at him.
A She-Wolf too that in her leanness looked
Freighted with cravings, one who many a soul
Hath brought ere now to dwell with misery,
Uprose, and with her apparition heaped
So vast a weight of dread on me that straight
I lost all hope of mounting summit-wards.
And as to one set eagerly on gain
Cometh that hour which worketh loss to him,
Forcing his tears, and saddening all his thought,

¹ A doubtful passage. It may be that it should run thus :

So that the time and the sweet season, nay,
E'en that wild creature's gaily-spotted coat
Gave cause for confidence.

So me this restless and unceasing Beast
Little by little drave to where the Sun
Doth cease to speak the language of his light.
While thus I faltered back to lower ground,
Before mine eyes one self-presented stood
Who seemed from silence long grown faint of voice ;
To whom, when thus in that great Solitude
I saw him, "Pity me," I cried aloud,
"Whate'er thou art, or Shade, or living Man !"
He answered me, "Not Man, though Man I was ;
Of Lombardy my Mother as my Sire,
And Mantuans both ; 'neath Julius was I born,
Albeit when near his end ; and in the times,
While yet the false and lying Gods had sway,
Under the good Augustus dwelt in Rome.
Poet I was, and of Anchises sang
That pious son who came to us from Troy,
After the burning of proud Ilium.
But thou, why turn again towards so much ill ?
Why not ascend the Mountain of Delight,
The origin and cause of every joy ?"
With modest brow thus did I answer him ;
"Art thou then that Virgilius, the fount
Whence gush the streams of such large eloquence ?

Glory and light of other bards, for me,
May the long zeal and steadfast love wherewith
Thy volumes I have sought, avail me now.
Thou art my master and begetter, thou
Alone art he from whom I did derive
The grand style that hath brought me my renown.
Thou seest yon beast, at sight of whom I turned ;
Defend me from her, oh illustrious Sage ;
She makes my pulses and my veins to tremble !”

He saw me weeping, and thus made reply :
“ ’Twere well for thee to take another way,
If thou wouldst quit this savage neighbourhood ;
For this same beast that caused thy cries, will let
None pass her, but stays all, and staying slays.
And, such her evil humour and condition,
She knows not how to glut her greedy moods,
But even with her food her famine grows.
Full many a beast she coupleth with, and shall
With many yet, until that Hound shall come,
Destined to work her mortal agony.
He shall not feast his soul on lands or gold,
But love and wisdom and all nobleness ;
From Feltro unto Feltro shall he reign,
And ’neath his sway our lowland Italy,

For whom Camilla gave her virgin blood,
And Nisus, Turnus, and Euryalus,
Were wounded unto death, shall safety find.
But her through State and City shall he hunt
Until he house her back in Hell, wherefrom
Primeval Hate and Malice started her.
Wherefore my thought and my discernment is,
For thine advantage, that thou follow me ;
And I will be thy guide and lead thee hence,
Through that eternal space, where thou shalt hear
Shrieking Despair, and Spirits of old time
Shalt see, who wail over their second Death.
More, thou shalt see the souls that are content,
E'en in the flames, for that they hope to come,
Whenever it may be, among the blessed ;
To whom, if thou desirest to ascend,
A worthier Spirit than I shall be thy guide.
To Her will I commit thee when I go ;
For that Imperial One who reigns above,
Because I was rebellious to his laws,
Wills not that I bring any to his realms.
He rules throughout all space, but there he reigns ;
There is his City, there his Sovereign Throne ;
Thrice happy he whom He electeth thither."

Then I to him : “ Oh Poet, by that God,
I do beseech thee, whom thou knewest not—
For that I would escape this ill and worse—
Conduct me whither thou hast said ; that so
I may behold St. Peter’s Gate, and those
Whose anguish thou dost tell me is so sad.”

With that he started, and I followed him.

CANTO II.

DAY was departing, and the darkened air
Drew all the living creatures upon earth
Home from their toils ; I only, and alone,
As 'twere for battle, did prepare myself
For my dread passage and the pity of it,
Which memory, that errs not, shall recall.
Aid me, ye Muses, and thou lofty Sense
Of Genius, and thou too, oh Memory,
That on thyself hast graven all I saw,
For so shall thy nobility be shown.
I thus began, " Poet, who guidest me,
Consider well my strength if it avail,
Ere thou dost trust me to this arduous voyage.
Thou sayest that the Sire of Sylvius,
While subject to corruption in his flesh,
Into the world immortal did descend ;
But that the Adversary of all ill

Should so far grace him, not unfitting seems
To one who thinketh worthily thereon,
When he remembereth the outcome high,
The Who, the What, that was to spring from him.
For true it is that he was foreordained,
In Heaven's Empyrean, ancestor
Of blessed Rome and her imperial sway,
Which two were 'stablished as the holy place
And seat of greater Peter's successor.
He by this quest, for which thou laudest him,
Learned things diverse that into causes grew
Of his own triumph and the Papal Gown.
Then later, went that way the Chosen Vessel,
To bring us confirmation of that faith
Which is the first step in Salvation's path.
But I, why should I go? Who voucheth me?
Neither Æneas am I, nor yet Paul;
Nor I nor others have me worthy deemed.
I fear, should I resign myself to go,
My going would prove folly; thou art wise,
Thy thoughts express me better than my words."
As one who wills no more what once he willed,
But with new thoughts doth turn to purpose new,
Withdrawing wholly from his starting point,

Such on that dark hillside did I become ;
And did by over pondering dissipate
My purpose, at the first so lightly made.
“ If I thy speech have rightly understood,”
Answered the Shade of the Highminded-one,
“ Thy soul hath been attacked by coward fear,
Which oftentimes encumbereth a man,
And turns him back from honourable emprise,
As some false trick of sight a frightened beast.
But, that thou may'st resolve thee of thy doubt,
I will now tell thee why I came, and what
I heard when first my heart was grieved for thee.
I was with those whose state is a suspense,
When unto me one came who called to me ;
A Lady she, so blessed and so fair,
I prayed her to lay some command on me.
The glory of her eyes excelled the stars,
And in her own tongue she began to speak,
With the soft sweetness of an Angel's voice.
' Oh Spirit of the courtly Mantuan,
Whose honour still endureth upon Earth,
And shall extend while Time prolongs itself,
A friend of mine, no friend of Fortune, meets
Such hindrance on the Desert Mountain-side,

That he hath turned in terror ; and I fear,
From what I have heard tell of him in Heaven,
Lest by this time he be so far astray,
That I have come too late to his relief.
So go ; and with thy wealth of speech ornate,
And with all else that his deliverance needs,
Assist him, so that I may be consoled.
His Beatrice I am, who bid thee go ;
Thence come I whither I would fain return ;
'Tis Love hath moved me, and now makes me speak ;
When I shall be before my Lord again,
I will be frequent in my praise of thee.'
Then was she silent, and I thus rejoined :
' Oh Lady, who alone in thy desert
Dost stand, through whom mankind excelleth all
That in the Heaven of smallest arc is found,
So grateful thy command, that e'en the time
Spent in the doing of it seems delay.
No need to further open out thy will ;
But tell me what the cause may be, wherefore
Thou hast not stayed thyself from coming down
To this low centre from the ampler space,
Whither e'en now thou burnest to return.'
' Since 'tis thy wish to penetrate thus far

I will inform thee briefly,' she replied,
'Why 'tis I have not feared to enter here.
Fear is but owed to what hath power to harm,
And things that cannot harm demand no fear.
So fashioned am I by the grace of God,
Your misery may not reach me, nor the flame
That burneth here uplift itself against me.
A gentle Lady dwelleth in high Heaven,
Who this same hindrance, about which I charge thee,
Doth so compassionate, that she breaks down
The sterner judgments that prevail on high.
She, bearing her request, Lucia sought,
And said, Thy faithful one hath need of thee ;
Him I commend to thee ; Lucia then,
The foe of all things cruel, rose and came
To where I sat with Rachel of old time,
And said, "Oh, Beatrice, true praise of God,
Why not befriend him who did love thee so,
That for thy sake he left the common crowd ?
Dost thou not hear the misery of his plaint ?
Dost thou not see the Death he battleth with
Beside that flood which magnifies no sea ?" .
No worldling e'er towards gain so swiftly flew,
Or fled from loss, as I upon her words,

Came downward hither from my happy seat,
Confiding in thy power of noble speech,
Which honoureth thee and those who hearken to it.’
So soon as she had ended all her charge,
Weeping she turned away her lustrous eyes,
Making me thus more eager to set forth ;
So then I came to thee, as she desired ;
And from the presence of that Savage Beast
I took thee, who had barred the way to thee,
Unto the Mountain Beautiful ; and now
What is it, why, why haltest thou ? And why
Find lodging in thy heart for coward fear ?
Why fail in ardour and undauntedness,
When three such blessed Ladies from Heaven’s Court
Have shown their care for thee, and my words too
Have given thee promise of so grand a boon ? ”
As flowerets that beneath the chills of night
Have lain declined and closed, soon as the Sun
Burns white upon them, raise themselves, and stand
Erect, and spread out open on their stems,
So with my wearied valour fared it then,
And through my heart such goodly ardour coursed
That in undaunted fashion I began :
“ Right pitiful is she who succoured me ;

And courteous thou, whose swift obedience bore
The message true that she did charge thee with ;
Thy words have roused in me so keen a will
That to mine earlier purpose I return.
Go forward then ; henceforth our wills are one ;
My teacher thou, my master, and my lord.”
So spake I to him, and when he moved on
I entered on the steep and tangled way.

CANTO III.

“**T**HROUGH me ye pass into the doleful
realm;
Through me ye pass into eternal pain ;
Through me ye pass among the lost and damned ;
Justice impelled my Founder’s lofty will ;
Divine Omnipotence constructed me,
Supernal Wisdom, and primeval Love ;
Before I was, no things created were,
Save what had been from all eternity,
And henceforth I eternally endure ;
All hope abandon ye who enter here.”
These words in sadly tinted character
I saw upon a portal high inscribed ;
“ Master,” said I, “ their sense seems hard to me.”
But he to me, as one familiar, “ Here
Tis fitting that thou leave mistrust behind,
And fitting here that timorousness should die.

We to that place of which I spake to thee
Are come, where thou shalt see the wretched folk
In whom the good of Reason hath been lost.”
With that he placed his hand on mine, and so
With show of comfortable countenance
Led me within the pale of secret things.
There sighs, and plaining, and shrill notes of pain,
Resounded through the starless atmosphere ;
And forthwith set me weeping ; tongues diverse,
And outcries horrible, words of uttered woe,
Accents of rage, voices both loud and faint,
And mid all these, the sound of smiting hands,
Made up a tumult that went round and round
Unceasing, in that ever-darkened air,
Like sand in spirals when the whirlwind blows.
Then I, who wore confusion like a coif,
Said, “ Master, tell me what is this I hear ?
And who are these who seem thus woe-begone ? ”
And he to me : “ This miserable state
They keep, the wretched souls of those who lived
Alike unworthy or of praise or blame.
And with their caitiff company are mixed
Those Angels who rebelled not, but who yet
Stood not for God, but for themselves alone :

Heaven drave them forth, to keep its beauty pure,
And the infernal deep received them not,
Lest haply should the damned take glory of them.”
And I: “What doth befall them dire enough
To rouse such lamentation?” He replied:
“They have no hope of death; and this their life,
So blind, so base, doth make them envious
Of every other fate; the world allows
No record of them good or ill; and them
Mercy and Justice do alike disdain.
Let us not speak of them; look, and pass on.”
Then I, who did so look, a banner saw
That in its whirling speed all pause abjured;
And after it there came a train of folk
So long, I never should have thought to dower
Death with th’ undoing of so vast a horde.
Among them did I note full many an one,
And saw and recognized the shade of him
Who out of vileness made the Great Renouncement;
And forthwith and assuredly perceived
That this was the low caitiff company
By God and by his foes alike abhorred.
Those abjects, who had never truly lived,
Went naked, sorely goaded by the stings

Of wasps and gadflies that abounded there ;
These made their faces all to run with blood,
Which mingling with their tears, and dropping down,
By loathsome worms was gathered at their feet.

Then, looking further on, more folk I saw
Along the bank of a great stream, and said :
“ Now, Master, grant to me that I may know
Who are all these, and what the ordinance
That seems to make them eager to pass over—
If so far I may trust the feeble light ? ”

And he to me : “ This shall be told to thee
So soon as we have planted a firm foot
Upon the joyless strand of Acheron.”

On this, with shamed and downcast eyes, in fear
Lest what I said had vexed him aught, I kept
Myself from speech until we reached the stream.
There, lo, an Old Man, white with ancient hair,
Made towards us in a galley, shouting loud :
“ Woe to you, wicked souls ! Indulge no hope
Of ever seeing Heaven ; behold, I come
To bear you over to that other shore,
Into eternal darkness, frost and fire.
For thee, thou living one, who standest there,
Depart thou from among these, who are dead.”

But seeing that I still departed not,
He said : " By other paths, from other ports,
Not here, shalt thou find passage to that strand ;
A lighter bark than mine must carry thee."
But unto him my Guide : " Be not provoked
Oh, Charon ; this is willed where what is willed,
Because 'tis willed, is done ; demand no more."
Thereon were quieted the shaggy cheeks
Of him that Boatman of the dark lagoon,
Who round about his eyes had rings of flame.
But all those Spirits, naked and outworn,
Changed colour, and did gnash their teeth, whenas
They heard his cruel words ; they did blaspheme
The very name of the Lord God, and curse
Their parents, and all human kind, the time
And place of their begetting, and their birth.
Yet none the less they turned them, one and all,
Much weeping, towards th' accursed shore, that
 bourne
Which waiteth all who hold not God in fear.
Charon, the Demon of the brazier eyes,
Did beckon them, and gather them all in,
Beating up every sluggard with his oar.
And as in autumn leaves begin to fall,

One after other, till the branch looks down,
To see ¹ all its own spoils bestrew the earth,
E'en so that evil seed of Adam fared ;
For one by one they flung them from that shore,
At Charon's call, like falcons to the lure.
Then on the dusky waters they put forth ;
And ere they had achieved the further side,
Another crowd had gathered upon this.
“ Oh, son of mine,” the courteous Master said,
“ All those who die under the wrath of God
Assemble hither out of every land ;
And prompt they are to pass the stream, for so
Justice Divine doth goad them, that their fear
Turns e'en to eagerness ; no Spirit good
E'er passes by this way ; therefore be sure '
That if this Charon doth complain of thee,
Thou well may'st read the import of his plaint.”
He scarce had ended, when the gloomy tracts
Shook with so vast a quaking, that e'en now
I sweat for terror at the thought thereof.

¹ Some commentators read “rende alla terra,” but Mr. Vernon says that “vede alla terra,” which I have adopted, has the support of all the best MSS.

The tear-bedabbled ground gave forth a blast,
And with the blast a blood-red lightning flash,
Which, spreading round, laid all my senses low :
I fell, like one whom slumber seizes on.

CANTO IV.

A HEAVY thunder broke the spell of sleep
Within my brain, and made me start like one
O'er-roughly wakened ; to my feet I rose,
And casting round my renovated eyes,
Strove with fixed gaze to learn where I had come.
In sooth upon the brink I found myself
Above that dolorous and abysmal vale,
Which gathers into one tumultuous tone
The utterance of innumerable woes.
So dark was it, of such profundity,
Such gloom, that all in vain adown the deeps
I peered ; no single thing might I discern.
“ Now to the rayless regions there below
Let us descend,” all pale the Poet said ;
“ I will go first, thou follow.” But to this,
I who had marked his change of hue, replied :

“ If thou, the wonted comfort of my fears,
Thyself dost fear, how dare I follow thee ? ”

Then he to me : “ The anguish of the folk
Who are beneath us here, upon my cheek
Doth paint a pity that thou deemest fear ;
Let us be going, for the way is long.”

Therewith he launched himself, and so enforced
Mine entrance on that circle which first makes
A girdle to th’ abyss ; no sound I caught
Of mourning loud, but as it were of sighs
That made a tremor in th’ eternal air,
And came of sadness untormented, such
As held those vast and varied companies
Of children and of women and of men.

Then unto me the Master good, “ Albeit
Thou askest not what Spirits these may be
Whereon thou gazest, I would have thee know,
Ere thou goest further, that they have not sinned ;
But that their merit, whatsoe’er it were,
Failed, for the lack of that Baptismal Grace
Which makes the portal of thy faith and creed.¹

¹ If “ parti ” be the true reading and not “ porta,” the line should run :

“ A part essential of thy faith and creed.”

And, for they died ere Christ had come and gone,
Not rightly was to God their worship paid.
And as they are, I am ; for such default
Alone, and for none other, are we lost ;
But so far only suffer, that we live
Life without hope, eternal in desire."

While thus I heard him speak, upon my heart
Great sadness seized, that, held in such suspense,
Folk of great worth should in those borders dwell.
"Tell me, my Master, tell me, oh my Lord,"
Said I, of fresh assurance ever fain
In that true faith which doth all errors quell,
"Hath ever any by his own desert,
Or by another's, issued forth from hence,
And afterward been blessed?" Divining well
My covert speech, he answered: "New was I
To this estate, when saw I hitherward
A Mighty One approaching, signed and crowned
As after victory ; from out our midst
The shade of our First Parent did he draw,
Abel's, his son, and Noah's, and with these
Moses the lawgiver, and Abraham
Th' obedient patriarch, David the king,
And Israel with his father and his sons,

And Rachel, her for whom he wrought so long,
With many another, bearing them to bliss ;
And I would have thee know that ere these went
No human souls were saved.”

While thus he spake,
We had not stayed our steps, but passed the grove,
The grove, I say, of densely-planted Souls ;
Nor had our path gone far from that first spot
Where I had slumbered,¹ when I marked a fire
That from the dark a conquered hemisphere
Illumined ; we therefrom a little space
Were still removed, but not so distant yet
That I might not, though but in part, discern
What honourable folk possessed the place.
“ Oh thou who on all Science and all Art
Conferrest honour, tell me, who are these
Whom honour from the general fashion keeps
Thus parted ? ” So I spake ; and he to me :
“ The name that doth distinguish their renown

¹ Ought we to read “sonno” here or “sommo?” Vernon says “sonno,” and I follow him. If it were “sommo” the line should run :

“ Nor had our path yet led us far adown
That side the summit.”

In that thy life above, hath gained for them
This favour and advancement out of Heaven.”
And with the word, I heard a voice which said,
“ Give honour’s greeting to the Bard sublime !
His Shade, which left us, hath returned again.”
And as that voice ceased and grew still, behold,
I saw four stately Shades approaching us ;
Their semblance told of neither woe nor joy ;
And my good Master thereupon began :
“ Mark him who cometh with that sword in hand,
Who leadeth the three others as their lord ;
Homerus he, the Poet Sovereign ;
Horatius cometh next, the Satirist ;
Ovidius is the third ; Lucanus last,
Because with me they all in common bear
That name which erst the single voice did utter,
They honour me, and therein do they well.”

So saw I gathered there that goodly school
Of him the lord of loftiest song, who soars
On eagle pinions high above them all.
But they, after brief converse held apart,
With sign of salutation turned to me ;
Whereat my Master smiled for graciousness ;
And still more honour did they pay to me,

They made me of their company, and I
Stood sixth amid such grouped Intelligence.
Then moved we on together towards the light,
Making discourse, whereof my silence now
Is all as seemly as itself was fair.
So to a noble castle's foot we came,
Sevenfold encircled within lofty walls,
And guarded round by a fair rivulet
Wherethrough we crossed, as over a dry ground ;
And under seven portals did I pass,
With those five Sages for my company,
Until we reached a meadow fresh and green,
Wherein were folk, slow-gazing, grave of mien,
With carriage as of much authority,
And voices sweet and low, but rare of speech.

We to one side did draw ourselves apart,
Upon a space, clear, luminous, and high,
Whence we could gaze on all ; there fronting us,
Upon th' enamelled sward, were shown to me
Great Shades, whom yet I glory to have seen.
Electra, with a goodly company,
I saw, 'mongst whom were Hector and Æneas,
Cæsar, in panoply, with falcon eyes,
Camilla, and the Queen Penthesilea ;

While on the other side the Latian King
Was seated with his child Lavinia.
I saw that Brutus who did hunt out Tarquin,
Lucretia, Julia, Martia, Cornelia ;
And, all apart, the lonely Saladin.
A little higher did I lift mine eyes
To where the Master of all those who know
Sat 'mid the Philosophic Family.
Him do they all regard, him honour pay.
In front of all the others, nigh to him,
There Plato did I see, and Socrates,
Democritus, who would to Chance assign
The making of the world ; Diogenes,
Thales, and with him Anaxagoras,
Empedocles and Zeno, Heraclitus,
And that good searcher of their qualities
In all things, Dioscorides ; there, too,
Orpheus I saw, Linus, and Tullius,
Euclides, Ptolemy, Hippocrates,
Galen and Avicenna, and him last,
Averrhoës, who made the Commentary.

I may not now rename them all in full,
For my vast theme doth goad me on, and makes
My words oft lag behind the facts they tell.

Our company of six did wane to two ;
My wise guide brought me forth another way,
Out of the quiet to the quaking air,
And so to parts where no light shines I came.

DE PROFUNDIS.

ALONE, alone, blind, motionless, and dumb—
For these unuttered musings are not speech—
No sense, save solitary consciousness
Of mind, with only memory for food,
One ceaseless cud of bitter provender,
Consumed but to be reconsumed. And yet,
If this be life, I am : no sight, no sound,
But blackness infinite, and unredeemed,
As are the silence and the solitude.

Albeit an universe unfathomable,
The spaces round about me, crowd and crush me ;
They hold me like a solid dungeon vault
Impenetrable, sealed, insphered, and stiff
With rigid airs of rayless adamant.
Less darkly should expended planets hang,
Dead in their orbits, round a parent sun

As dead as they; for through their gloom must pierce
The far off glimmer of unnumbered stars,
With faint alloy of recollected light,
To mar the fulness of extinguishment,
And make the pall that wraps their cosmic death
A pallid imperfection.

Memories

Of what I was, and what they were who loved me,
Sweep through me in a never-ending round
Of bootless chronicle, o'ergraven each
With mine own sentence self-adjudged; a tale
Of forfeit chance and squandered power, the choice
Of apathy and low content, high aims
Abandoned for the love of meaner things;
And every stage of the detested record,
Like saints upon the margins of a missal,
Studded with ghosts of those neglected ones,
Whose love had borne me upward into Heaven,
Had I but clung to them. None look on me;
They pass me by, as they had been a part
Of other histories than mine, and I
Nought, as I am, to them. Ah, happy Souls,
How could ye own a kinship with the lost,
How keep a smirching memory of the damned,

Or pity what 'twere grief and sin to pity,
Ay, look on that, which e'en to look on, were
Foul treason to your own felicity !
And were 't not so, how could ye comfort me ?
The shapes, that float before me and refloat,
Are only phantoms of your phantoms, not
Your blessed shades themselves, but shadows cast
Athwart that ceaseless and rebuking pageant,
Which mine unsleeping spirit ever paints
To feed Remorse and recreate Despair.

Farewell ; ah, would that I could say farewell ;
For then the curse would not be all it is ;
I might perchance forget you, as you me,
And lose a pang : but that would be to rend
Damnation's mantle, and disclose a glimpse,
A presage of Oblivion, that begun,
Might spread throughout my being at the last
A blessed canker of annihilation,
To eat up misery ; and so release,
Not me alone, nay, nay, not me alone,
But all the myriad millions of the damned,
In one wide universal amnesty,
And make a peace out of Hell's solitudes :
But this, alas, I know shall never be.

CLOUDS.

THE Earth is curtained two clouds thick,
Like blind eyes sleeping ;
Or one who lies both lone and sick,
Outworn with weeping.

The skies will clear for Earth, but ne'er
For blind eyes waking ;
And sick and lonely hearts must wear
Their chords to breaking.

I DUE CALICI.

HE was a poet-painter, hard, precise
In treatment, loved the prim and antique style
Men called pre-Raphaelite, yet sure of touch,
Daring in thought, and with rich colour ; knew
What 'twas to paint a lily's, pansy's heart,
As well as the petal-texture ; he showed once
A picture I remember with delight,
Simple, mysterious ; three figures ; one,
A woman in a white and amber gown,
And with a face, saint's, martyr's, what you will,
E'en such a saint as men make martyr of ;
With her, a man more earthy but as strong.
And third, a spiritual shape, long-winged,
His batlike vans, outstretched, translucent, gay,
With opal tints ; a chalice in each hand
Held forth for choosing : 'Twas a canvas far

Removed from its near fellows, and I stood
Looking, and pondering long on what it meant,
Or might mean, to its maker, till I wrought
—(Man *loquitur*)—its poem into these :

The bourne is reached at last, the hour hath come,
The Phantom who hath walked with us till now,
And drawn our spirits onward veiled and dumb,
Flings back the mantle from his dazzling brow ;
He cries, “Stay, ere ye part, behold, ’tis I,
The Master whom ye knew not ; I have laid
My hand upon your lives ; to strive or cry
Were to make bitter what is surely made
Not without sweetness, so ye but submit,
But cruel past all fear, should ye dare question it.”

He flingeth back his mantle, and stands bare ;
A thunder cloud bright with the baffled sun ;
The sum of all that our foreshadowings were ;
Terror and Hope incorporate and made one.
Ah, Phantom of destruction and dismay,
Why let us not ere this thy features learn ?
We might have stayed once, now we cannot stay ;
Have turned once, now we know not how to turn ;

Once hand from hand we had endured to sever;
Now heart hath grown to heart, and must grow on
for ever.

But even while I plead, ah Love of mine,
He putteth forth a chalice in each hand
Filled to the brim with misery's blackest wine;
And from his bright mouth cometh the command
"Choose ye and drink!" Mark, how one goblet swims
With bitter herbs that tincture it anew,
While nightshade wreaths are bound about the rims;
The other, and the nearest, Love, to you,
Hath its dark draught redeemed by floating flowers,
And ambient flecks of gold that image golden hours.

I may not tell thee of their properties,
For thou must choose, my shrinking one, not I;
As is most meet, in thine election lies
The future of the love that cannot die.
Wouldst thou one farewell ne'er to be renewed,
Eternal absence, memory's salveless stings,
Life in a rayless vault of solitude
Made hideous by the din of outer things?
Then let us drain the first, and get us gone,
With mute lips and closed eyes, to live life down alone.

But if—ah sweet one, thou hast chosen aright !
See, see, he hath dashed down the deadlier cup ;
How its spilt poison doth the herbage blight,
Its very nightshade wreath hath withered up,
And all its bitter herbs are charred to dust ;
And as I spurn the hated thing away,
Beneath my feet its metal breaks in rust ;
On Love's high forehead gentler glories play ;
He smiles, and into that thou holdest throws
A shower of golden flecks till the dark liquor glows.

'Tis done, 'tis done ; pierce through thy needless veil,
Thou Moon ; ye low Winds into whispers grow ;
And Breeze, and Beam, call up the Nightingale,
We would not hear our hearts beat as we go !
For all is joy for us to-night, to-night
That is no threshold of a long regret
For something passed for ever out of sight ;
Love showeth mercy to his children yet,
And tempereth the fate, that makes us his
In such unkindly sort, with kindly promises.

SONGS.

LA PLAINTE DU BERGER.

HAPPY things mate
Both small and great,
But the widowed owl seeketh her tree ;
And I will away to the deeps of the wood,
For my love hath forgotten me !

Ah hard, false maid, from crag to crag
Kind echoes put thy faith to shame,
They help my failing voice to drag
The useless burden of thy name
Over the barren mountain side,
And through the windings of the wood,
Our wood wherein I go to hide
For shame of thee and thy falsehood :

Happy things mate,
Both small and great,

But the widowed owl seeketh her tree ;
And I will away to the deeps of the wood,
For my love hath forgotten me !

Ah faithful echoes, do not mar
The silence any more for me,
Her name with all it meets doth jar,
Though once so sweet in glade and lea ;
And sweetest then, when we two sang
It chancing in some olden rhyme,
And ye took up our songs, and rang
Them o'er and o'er for your pastime :

Happy things mate,
Both small and great,
But the widowed owl seeketh her tree ;
And I will away to the deeps of the wood,
For my love hath forgotten me !

'Twas summer then, 'tis winter now,
But spring, the lover's hope, is near,
And draws my heart to ponder how
Her heart might open with the year,
And find a home perchance for mine,

And make fresh summer evenings glow,
As glow those did, with love's sunshine ;
Ah no, vain winter dreams, ah no :

Happy things mate,
Both small and great,
But the widowed owl seeketh her tree ;
And I will away to the deeps of the wood,
For my love hath forgotten me !

AT ARM'S LENGTH.¹

DEAD rose leaves, lily petals, heliotropes,
Crowns, flower tipped still, of fruited mig-
nonette ;

Gather and burn them, they are withered hopes
Of that gone summer we had best forget.

Woe upon April's maidenlike deceits,
Her flowery boons that summer was to bring ;
And woe again on June her sister's cheats,
E'en falser than the promise of the spring.

What have we brought each other, you and I ?
Unuttered vows that failed upon the tongue,
A hand once pressed perchance, a single sigh,
Songs set to thoughts of flame, but left unsung.

¹ Suggested by a picture of Mr. Boughton's in the New Gallery Exhibition of 1900.

Each shunned the goal that neither seemed to see ;
Each knew the truth that neither dared to tell ;
What spirit colloquy could briefer be,
Begun and dying on one word, "Farewell" ?

Poor relics of the lily and the rose !
How the dull flame their precious litter feeds ;
But mark, it yields no perfume as it glows
More subtle than the smoke of coarser weeds.

The pyre dies down ; it makes but a grey spot
With blackened herbage for a narrow hem ;
Nay, these are sacred ashes, spurn them not ;
But leave them here, and me to gather them.

A SERENADE.

NIGHT-WIND, tenderly bend
Over my lover and say,
“ Lady thy wandering friend
Met with me far away ;

“ And bade me whisper to thee,
As I passed by thy southern home,
That the heart should a lingerer be
However the wearer roam.”

Loitering wind, why stay ?
Fly to her chamber, and speak
The words that I bid thee, and lay
Thy lip on the maiden’s cheek.

And with it a dewdrop clear
As her eye when she waketh, and then
Bid her know both the kiss and the tear
Have come from a northern glen.

A STORM.

THE first storm from the westward rings
October's funeral knell ;
Across my lawn the sea-wind sings
“ Farewell, farewell ! ”

The falling leaves and shredded flowers
Whirl past my feet pell-mell ;
I cry to these, as to dead hours,
“ Farewell, farewell ! ”

The hours that shone, the flowers that blew
Beneath your eyes' soft spell,
Grew dull and died to hear from you
“ Farewell, farewell ! ”

Ah, let not Love, my loved one, die,
Nor his departing swell
The careless west-wind's cruel cry
“ Farewell, farewell ! ”

WRITTEN TO A SWISS TUNE.

THE dawn delays, the midday fadeth,
And nights grow chilly, dear,
And nights grow chilly, dear ;
A grayer dew our meadow braideth,
The weary winter months are near :
Ah, then, the summer day
Why need it pass away?
Ah, cruel heart, why say,
Thou wouldst be true alway?
Adown the mountain creep the snows,
And summer love with summer goes.

Our boldest flock will never wander
Beyond the valley, dear,
Beyond the valley, dear ;
Nor can I bring my heart to ponder
On what may chance another year.

Ah, then, the summer day,
Why need it pass away?
Ah, cruel heart, why say,
Thou wouldst be true always?
Adown the mountain creep the snows,
And summer love with summer goes.

The village wood our farewells bounded,
As I stood watching thee,
As I stood watching thee ;
Soon through the pines thy yodel sounded,
Too light for my poor heart and me :
Ah, then, the summer day,
Why need it pass away ?
Ah, cruel heart, why say,
Thou wouldst be true always?
Adown the mountain creep the snows,
And summer love with summer goes.

I hear it still, thy phrase of parting,
Thy cold " Auf wieder sehen,"
Thy cold " Auf wieder sehen ;"
To me, who felt the tear-drop starting
From eyes that sought for thine in vain.

Ah, then, the summer day,
Why need it pass away ?
Ah, cruel heart, why say,
Thou wouldst be true always ?
Adown the mountain creep the snows,
And summer love with summer goes,

Ah, happy vale, though winter bind thee,
For thee the spring shall come,
For thee the spring shall come ;
And thy lost song-birds flock to find thee,
While my lone heart lies dark and dumb.

Ah, then, the summer day,
Why need it pass away ?
Ah, cruel heart, why say,
Thou wouldst be true always ?
Adown the mountain creep the snows,
And summer love with summer goes.

LINES.

RED leaves are driven
Hither and thither,
Frost-smitten garden plots
Shrivel and wither ;
Winds have grown wild again,
Winter resumes her reign,
My heart renews its pain,
Love me for ever !

Summer is dead and gone,
Autumn lies bare,
Chill o'er the wrecks of both
Breatheth despair ;
Such warmth as summer brought
Such calm as autumn taught,
All, all hath gone for nought,
Love me for ever !

Lone hearts must always
Droop with the year,
Moan with the winter blast,
Solace and cheer,
Such as in Nature lies,
Dies as a season dies,
Oh, let those changeless eyes
Love me for ever !

Once more that look for me,
Once more that smile,
Here on my bosom, love,
Rest thou the while ;
Deep and true, deep and true ;
Better than heaven's blue,
Steep my heart through and through,
Thus, thus for ever !

LE CŒUR DE BEAUMANOIR.

A LOVE STORY.

IN THREE BOOKS.

LE CŒUR DE BEAUMANOIR.

BOOK I.

THERE flows a river in the west of France,
That parteth two fair provinces, itself
The fairest thing in each of them, and I
Have loved it, and have traced through summer days
Of tender meditation all its course ;
And in its severing floods have seen the fate
That holdeth lives asunder silently,
And in its beauty seen that love which still
Is lovely, none the less for bringing doom.
With varied charm it flows from source to sea,
But midway lies the fairest reach of all,
For there the waters broaden to a lake
Broken by grassy islets, and sunk deep
In uplands, that are glad with flowery corn,
And patches of hill pasture rough with knolls

Of bush and boulder ; from the banks below,
Behind a marge of water-willows, fringed
With many a rood of marsh plant rush and flag,
Far into the clear shallows, group by group,
Their green shafts glinting in the vaporous air,
High pointing poplars shoot in curves that mark
The gentle figure of the shores ; above
The tillage and the belt of pasture land,
Thick oak woods, out of which the white crags gleam,
Close skyward everywhere.

Athwart the east,
Whence the stream spreads, a larger island lies,
Whereon the ruins of a Monastery,
With chapel, garden walls, and cloisters, stand,
Flanked by towered water-gates, that north and south
Lead down to rocks from which two bridges spring,
And yoke it to the mainland on each side :
While opposite—there being a space of plain
Up river some few miles on either hand—
Twin quays and alleys of a little town,
Fronting each other, with the stream between,
Stretch eastwards : the church ruins in their midst
Rise high with arch and jagged architrave,
Backed by the river-reaches and the sky ;

While round these, vine, fig, ivy, apple, and plane,
And much else, the untended aftergrowth
Of monkish horticulture, wave and climb.

Within the precincts of the Abbey dwelt
The Curé of the town ; a gentle, still,
And shambling creature, with a shattered mien
Like his own ruins ; and, as they were, nought,
Save that he was in soul, as they in form,
A record and a relic. He was stored
With annals of the Order, and these made
To him all history and all delight,
Knowledge, love, reverence ; they were to him
Antiquity ; the great tide of the world
He only knew where in their chronicles
It surged against the Fathers, as at whiles
The waters of the lake in tempest lashed
The Abbey landing-steps ; their graveyard made
The range of his dead hope ; and unto him
Religion and the Faith he breathed in were
Two things, like him, of lost inheritance
On earth—they being gone—till in God's time
They or their like should come again.

One day

He found me loitering in the cloistered court

Where lie the bones of all the Brotherhood,
From the first Abbot to the last, who died
So fitly, that his "Nunc Dimittis" rang
E'en while the phrenzied mob, that drave them forth,
Was yelling at the water-gates. I stood
Among the orderless array of tombs,
Fronting one slab, whereon a well-worn rim
Below its tracery still showed the name,
"Edouard de Beaumanoir:" and underneath,
Upon the central tablet of one side,
Below the broken line that told his age
And birth and death years, these few words still clear—
So clear, I read some present tendance there—
"All but his heart is here;" and while I mused
On where the heart might be, and why not here,
And what the tale, if any, up he came,
The little clumsy Curé, bowing low,
With many backward thrustings of his heel
Against his sash-fringes, and many a sweep
Of his broad beaver hat, whose tassels caught
The briars and thistle-heads. "Ah Sir," said he,
"Those last words puzzle you, but come round here."
Then on the foot slab of the monument
I read in letters sharpened with like care,

“ The heart of Angeline de Kerghrist lies
Inside this tomb.” “ And his,” the Curé said,
“ Is laid in hers, by special courtesy
Of the then Abbess of the Holy House
Wherein she died, a quarter league from this,
Among the oak woods yonder ; these have grown
High since their time, five hundred years ago,
And hid the Convent from the Monastery ;
But in those days you might have looked with ease
From window upon window, and have heard
Both Nun and Monk at Office at one time.
And each of these, for they were lovers, Sir,
Might take some comfort in the neighbourhood
That sight and sound made seem so very close,
Though still so hopelessly afar. Their tale
Is told in an old manuscript, I found
Among the archives of the Brotherhood :
’Tis writ by one who calls himself the friend
Of Beaumanoir, his comrade in the wars
And in the Monastery ; one who loved
God little, as I fear, and God’s peace less.
As himself says : for ‘ I came here,’ he writes,
‘ After a life on saddle and under tent,
Battered and lanced by many a dint and thrust

And wearied of all things save Edouard's love.
 For this, I gave my helmet for a cowl,
 And took a hair shirt in my breastplate's stead,
 A girdle for a sword-belt, and with hands
 That knew best how to couch a spear, or swing
 A mace about folks' ears, I have sat hours,
 Ay, weeks and years, within these sleepy walls,
 Twirling a rosary, till the thread broke,
 And left me for a change the beads to string,
 And all this for a heartache not my own !'
 Yet he did more than this, for he has left
 Full many a sheet of manuscript, wherein
 The story of his fights and Edouard's love
 Is written, and among these, page on page
 Of gibe and groan at his monastic life.
 'Tis a quaint, godless reading, out of tune
 With such a pious place ; and vain perchance,
 And godless, were the pains that I have used
 To write it all anew ; yet you might find
 It serve to garnish one night's solitude.
 I will go fetch it."

With the word, my priest,
 Shoon, cassock, hat and tassels, sash and keys,
 Shuffled away ; and ere I could walk round

The little graveyard, had come back again,
Bearing a thing like Jeremiah's roll.
Ah me, thought I, good prophet, little blame
To King Jehoiakim if thy poem lit
The royal hearthstones of the winter-house,
Were it a portent of so vast a length
As this ! Yet I made shift to thank the man,
Without a sigh. So he went off again ;
And after one more hour of loitering,
I to mine inn. Dull broke the afternoon,
With wind that swept the lake from end to end,
And whirling round the ruins, drave the stream
Up the dark sides of both the little quays.
A look into the Curé's manuscript
Seemed like a refuge from my window-panes,
That showed me but a pair of empty streets,
Mottled with rain : so, turning round, I drew
A settle to the fire-side, and untied
The strings of the thick packet. Daylight failed
Ere I worked through, with many a yawn and pause,
The uncouth ramblings of the soldier-monk,
Whose patches of impiety alone
Redeemed his dulness, as the flower and scent
Of furze bushes illuminate gray downs.

'Twas proof of a deep tolerance and love
In our poor priest to have transcribed them all.

It seemed that Edouard was a Breton Knight,
A friend of the great Constable, and fought
In the long war that raged through Brittany,
Between De Montfort and the Count de Blois,
For that fair Duchy ; that his Mother came
Of some good house in Provence ; that his Father
Died in his youth, upon whose sudden loss—
The far too common story of those days—
An uncle dispossessed the wife and child,
And drove them into Provence, where they lived,
Protected by the widow's kin. The boy
Grew up in each intent a Troubadour,
Poet and soldier, with the vagrant tastes
Which marked that race of military bards ;
And in his wanderings he won the love
Of Angeline, the daughter and sole child
Of Raoul Kerghrist, Castellan of Rouen.
Once more the common tale ; he had no land,
So Raoul grimly stepped between their loves,
And set him wandering to gain a name,
And, should occasion favour him, to oust
His uncle from his father's barony ;

Or, failing that, to play his uncle's part,
And win broad lands from others. Thus he went :
And once again th' inevitable chance :
Come back with land and fame, he found his death
Had been the sole news that poor Angeline
Had heard of him ; that Raoul in good faith
Had deemed him dead, and so had giv'n his daughter
In marriage to some rough marauding lord,
Whose raids had much disturbed the Castellan,
And cost the Rouen burghers many a freight
Of rich rim-laded barges on their Seine,
Or mule trains in their forest passes. Him
Sir Raoul, working with his child's despair,
Was fain to tame into a son-in-law ;
So, after scantiest wooing, clinched at once
His robber's whim for her wan loveliness,
And they were wed. All this the Troubadour
Heard, riding at the head of a gay train,
Unhelmed, his lute and ribbons at his back,
Astride a smooth-limbed barb that he had trained,
Meet for his Lady, and with page and hound
Running below his bridle. At the news,
Sir Hubert, the biographer, who rode
By Edouard's side, having, so runs his roll,

Solaced his stomach with a round of oaths,
Snuffed battle in his friend's mishap, and gave,
Like Moloch, after a still worse checkmate,
His one and only counsel, instant war.
Not so the gentlier-sensed Provençal ; he,
Far nearer tears than rage, drew rein awhile ;
Then, heeding not the bursts of comfort plied
By faithful Hubert in between his oaths,
Rode silent into Rouen, fronted Raoul,
Saw through the man, but saw his tale was fair,
And had no heart to fasten feud on him
Whose blood was hers ; and so, for many days
Stayed in the town, whose every stone and turn,
And daily sights and sounds, but made to him
Fresh images and echoes of despair.
There would he wander forth from street to street,
At whiles, or pace beside the bending Seine,
Or in his solitary chamber, mocked
By his lute ribbons, of mere bitterness,
Would sing some song that he had sung to her,
Or made of her in march or bivouac,
Whilst he was wandering ; and e'en sometimes—
So strong the quaint Provençal humour in him—
He would string stanzas to old melodies,

Play on the name of Rouen, calling it
His city of Ruin. Twice or thrice in rage
He sent for Hubert, and with set teeth planned
A night surprise of the grim robber's den ;
But when in talk the two had reached the point
Of victory, when the vanquished husband lay
Yielded to ransom, or his leaguered hold
Demanded parle, Edouard would cry, "What then?
I cannot slay the man ; or if I could,
What could his wife be to his slayer, Hubert ?"
And so break off and weep ; and his rough friend
Would leave him then, too rude to comfort him,
Too honest for ill counsel. But at last,
News came that Angeline was left alone,
Her lord away upon some distant raid ;
And Edouard's heart leapt in him, and forthwith
He got to horse, and rode away alone,
And saw her, and came back after long hours
With one poor grain of comfort, and but one :
For she, heart-loyal even to her doom,
And little owing to the wedded fiend,
Whose devil's whim for her was past, had sworn
To call him to her should her need grow dire ;
But, having sworn, had bidden him begone,

With such enforced impetuosity
Of anguish, such a storm of prayer on prayer,
As drove him from her speechless, no word said
Of all that he had pondered, with no proof
Of her love, save her agony, and of his
No show, save in his coming. Thus they met
And parted ; he through wood and over heath
Rode as one stunned, scarce heeding how he rode.
Wide, ere he reached it, swung the city gate,
And with unwonted promptness fell the bridge ;
For well the Warder, as all Rouen folk,
Knew of his wrongs ; and with some score or two
Of leather-jerkined fellows had consumed
Cup after cup in comment thereupon,
Till they and he were ready, on a hint,
With something more than pity ; as it was,
His opened gate and lowered drawbridge showed
Which way his heart leant. Him Sir Edouard passed
With scarce a salutation, and rode on,
His eyes fixed on his saddle-bow, until
His steed stopped at the well-known hostel door.
There stood Sir Hubert lolling, unto whom
He without preface : “ I have seen her ; ” then,
Clenching both hands upon his bridle, “ Ah,

Thou Christ, I do beseech thee, grant to me
But this, that I may never see her more !”

“ And, by the Mother of God, it seemed to me
The drollest prayer that ever went to Heaven,”

Writes Hubert, “ But, however that may be,
He made it, and upon the making turned
Stairwards, and so went supperless to bed.”

Rough Hubert then proceeds : “ Of all things strange
The strangest seems to me that men should fight,

Save for the love of it ; for me, I own

My own taste lies in battle ; some men love

Wine, others women ; I love wine at whiles,

And, with submission to these holy walls,

Women upon occasion ; but for war

My stomach never flagged. Your toper too

Is choice of age and colour in his drink,

Must have his grapes grown, liquor pressed, flask
sealed,

On some anointed hill-side ; now for me,

I class wines by their flagons, and these last

Mainly by sizes ; howsoe'er, I grant

That 'twixt me and your dexterous wine-bibber

There is this much in common ; as he hath

His humour of the day for this or that,

So I for some especial kind of fight.
How often upon waking, as I donned
My gear, have I debated with my soul,
'What shall we use, mace, lance, or sword, to-day?'
How the divided appetites would shift !
For scarcely could I muse, 'How sweet it is
To find your lance-head well and truly fixed
Inside a fellow's hip, and, bearing on
With all your weight, to feel him topple and slide,'
Then straightway, like a jealous wench, the thought
Skipped in, as 'twere, of splitting morions,
And how one wrenched the mace-spikes from between
The bars of a bent vizor ; over which
Visions of sword-play—there is much to say
For thrust and buffet—would arise. I' th' event,
I mostly found mine Esquire had my lance,
And somehow, as the foemen came in sight,
My fingers twirled unasked the little mace :
Ah, ah, the little mace ! How many pates
He knew in those days, and how very few
Of all he knew ever remembered him !
Five minutes' parle concluded all his friendships,
And much in the same fashion. Ah, God's love,
'Tis something in the dearth of these dead days,

Wherethrough I bask, and gape, and stretch myself,
Like a lame hound i' the kitchen, to run o'er
That last month's marching with the Constable,
After the Dinan leaguer; every day,
Planned or unplanned, gave us some choice set-to :
No matter where we rode, o'er Breton heath,
Or by fair Norman roadways, sure as fate,
Ere we began to yawn for idleness,
We fell into some pleasant ambushade,
Or caught towards afternoon the welcome flash
Of English spear-heads perking overhill,
Travellers under convoy, it might be,
Or homeward foragers with plenishment
For one of Montfort's garrisons. For us,
Whose joy was there, what better life could be ?
But how good Edouard, who, at best of times,
Before he lost the Damsel, never owned
A stomach over keen for press and fray—
Not that he lacked in courage, ah me, no,
But 'twas not to his liking—how, I say,
He could keep saddle with us day by day,
Passed all our comprehensions ; he fought well,
Better than well ; there was a grace, a speed,
A smoothness in him, as he passed about,

Neat, lithe, and fiery as lightning, through
The spaces of a mêlée ; when he struck,
'Twas done with such light finish, that his man
Fell but with half the ordinary fuss ;
While Edouard would ride on, and take the next,
With such an easy sway of horse and arm,
And thus, with press of spur or turn of wrist,
Would swing and bend along from point to point
With so much pretty certainty, it seemed
As though he tuned his motions in his brain
To one of his own songs : and all this too
Without one touch of relish ! At the halt,
He would unhelm, and show an unlit face,
And take the talk about him of the day,
So wearily, and drink his cup of wine
With such a want of fellowship and cheer,
That had he not been what he was in fight,
Or what he was at camp-fire with his songs,
Albeit they were sad ones, he had made
More foes than e'er he slew, and ill wishers
Far worse than those he wounded ; then besides,
He never held to ransom in those days,
For all the need he had for gold was gone,
And this made enemies ; and many an one,

Who loved the chink of merks in a pouch, would
scowl.

As sourly as was prudent, when he saw
Our Edouard let some captive go scot free."

So with much more of march and countermarch,
Of raid, and foray, ride, and bivouac,
Rambles this rude biographer ; through all,
No word of Edouard's sorrow ; for to him
A broken heart was as a tongue unknown,
Uttered in vain about him ; he could ride
A stirrup's length from ceaseless misery,
Yet see it not, as a deaf man who sits
Working some quarried cave on the vexed shore,
Around the callous porches of whose ears,
The walls made murmurous by the moaning sea,
Ay, e'en the throbbing ocean tides themselves,
And restless ramp of the high-mettled waves,
Are mute as windless hillocks, or the womb
Of some long-sealed, forgotten sepulchre.

Alas, alas, for Beaumanoir, he turned
Back to the only beaten path that lay
For one of gentle blood in those wild days :
Turned with that hectic and unloving crave,
That passionate pursuit of toil, wherewith

The wretched, striding o'er the wrecks of life,
Hack its hard hours to blunt the points of woe,
When they might die, and be at peace, and lose
All sense of loss or rapture. So he lived
The common life of taking other lives,
As wretched or less wretched than his own ;
Rode, fought, or rested in the daily chance
Of war ; men called him the sour Troubadour,
From envy of his prowess, or perchance,
Of malice in the matter of his ransoms,
Or spleen because he kept himself apart ;
Such names make oft the vengeance of the mean,
When fear stays worse ; yet nathless would they come,
At nightfall to the door of Guesclin's tent,
Or crowd about the camp-fires, when he sang
His songs of Provence, as he sometimes did,
When the fit took him, or the Constable
Would thrust a lute upon him. Thus he passed
Five lonely years, for Hubert's mastiff love
Broke not his solitude, and for the rest—
The throng of knights he loathed—of all the ills
That can be heaped on ill, the bitterest is
To have rude men for daily company.
His summers went in valorous listlessness

From leaguer unto leaguer, camp to camp,
And field to field, just as the long war swayed,
Hither and thither over bleeding France ;
His winters, in dejection unalloyed,
He passed with Hubert in his Breton hall,
Among the woods of Evrau upon Rance.
Through all this time, no word of her he loved
If Hubert's knowledge, and his chronicle,
Be to be trusted for so much, had come
To fling a moment's flash, albeit of pain,
Athwart the dull deeps of his apathy.
The end made plain the wrongs of Angeline :
Her wedded life began with a few weeks
Of loathsome adulation and caress,
Until the heat of his detested love
Burnt out in her rude lord ; in scarce a month
The poor soul hailed, like a long-hunted hind
Catching the sight of some wide water-side,
The first blessed chills of that satiety,
Which rid her of him for awhile ; alas,
These were not all that waited her ; ere long
The robber turned to demon, 'neath the goad
Of his wife's gentleness, and came to hate,
With hate that fed upon the misery

Itself had made, the saintly victim placed
Too high for his low liking. As was meet,
His castle teemed with devils worse than he,
Both male and female ; as their master passed
Through the vile sequence of his ruffian moods,
E'en so did they with well-tuned licence turn
From budding insolence to full-blown scorn,
Mating his manner : hers was such a fate,
As some stray seraph's might be, caught by fiends,
And kept awhile, forgotten of its God,
To make the sport of Hell. But whatso'er
She bore, she bore it silently ; in her
Nobility and wretchedness had sealed
Their stately pact which dowereth souls divine
With such high sense of sovereignty o'er pain,
That from endurance seen, as from a throne,
The torturer doth seem a slave, who pays
Imperial honours to the tortured ; still,
Not less for this, to such the moment comes,
When baffled malice, with blood-blinded eyes,
Rushes on some last madness, but to feel
The furnace of its own misdoing, quick
With seven-fold fires no longer to be pent,
Hurl out upon the raging hands that pile them

An after-blast of flames and doom. And so,
To Angeline at length the moment came,
Supreme in outrage ; an eclipse of shame,
With tempest in its track, o'er casting her
As with the shadow of hell ; a lightning stroke,
That charred the current in her patient veins,
Making her gasp for vengeance : so hath come
To some long-suffering people one late hour
Of sacred madness and sublime despair,
Sweeping off tyrants and the vermin crowds
That battened with them on mankind ; an hour
When all the spirits of good and evil, linked
In mazes of distempered frolic, rose
To dance a dance of death over the world.
It came that final and transfiguring wrong ;
But how, Sir Hubert saith not ; what it was,
Perhaps not even Edouard ever knew ;
It was enough for him that there arose,
From out that donjon keep of bitterness,
A cry of agony that reached his ears.

“ I do remember me,” writes Hubert, “ well
How came the messenger from Angeline.”
Ah me ! How when on his dull page I caught
The name of Angeline, a glory seemed

To glow thereon ! So in some eerie glade
At nightfall doth the weary woodman hear
The prelude of an early nightingale
Relieve the terror-laden silences ;
So, too, the moody helmsman, who hath steered
By compass through th' unvaried night hours, catches
The sudden glint of moonlight over prow ;
Or some lone man the sight of her he loves,
Or unforeseen expression of her name,
To give him one full instant of delight
Along the void of his unfurnished days.

“ We were at Josselin,” the Mastiff writes,
“ Planning a night surprise for Ploërmel,
Where Montfort lay then ; planning did I say
'Twas planned ; the Josselin gates were in our guard,
Our sentries held the circuit of its walls,
Lest some young cit, for love of Montfort's gold,
Or likelier, from sheer itch of doing harm,
Might take a moonlight jaunt across the heath,
And spoil the sport ; Jean, Sieur de Beaumanoir,
Edouard, and I, young Rohan, and some more,
Were seated at our dinner, in full talk
Of the night's work, when of a sudden rose
A hubbub in the courtyard ; we got up

To see our fellows crowding round a lad
On horseback ; 'twas a comely strip enough,
And comelier still the war-horse, whose broad back
And spreading forehead stretched his boyish shanks.
Daintily clad he was, and had the mien
One sees in pages, one which cometh rather
Of gentle nurture than of gentle blood.
My master had a tongue, too, and could don
The easy swagger of a man who takes
The value of his errand as his own.
' I seek Sir Edouard, cousin to the Sieur
De Beaumanoir ; where shall I find him, sirs ?'
This with the air of one whose toes at least
Could reach the stirrup-irons, and who could climb
His steed's side without hoisting. There he sat,
As we looked forth, twirling his bridle end,
High-perched among the men-at-arms, who stood
With thumb in belt, or chin on partizan,
Eyeing the youngster up and down, with laugh
And jest from one to th' other that looked like
Rough weather for his sapling vanity.
' How now, Sir Consequence ?' quoth Edouard's
squire.
' Art thou king's herald come demanding parle,

That thou dost prate so loud? Amongst us here
We talk up to our ounces, whereof thine
Are somewhat of the fewest; art thou wont
To call for junket with so proud a crow
Under thy lady's window, my pet cockerel?'
Loud rose the general laugh; but when I looked
On the bold boy now half abashed, and saw
The drawn flanks of his courser heave, and him
Mud-speckled from his brown cheeks to his hose,
Thought I, this youngster's bearing and his zeal,
Say something for his errand; at the least
So long a ride makes him respectable;
I'll get me down there; ere I turned to go,
Whom should I see but Edouard in the court!
Backward from push and buffet, left and right,
Stumbled groom, man-at-arms, and squire; and left
A little space of audience in their midst;
And laugh and jeer stayed, just as stay the talk
And twitter of the gallery, when the horns
Sound for the laissez-aller in the lists.
It chanced, however, that the castle cook
Saw not our knight; he stood behind the lad,
Lifting, with wondrous care to keep his shins
Clear of the courser's heels, a ladle heaped

With meal, intent to play a scullion's joke,
And baste the youngster overhead : alas,
How often doth it fall out so in war !
Just as you see a slip of your man's neck
Under his morion, and your arm swings out,
Down comes a mace upon your wristbone ; so,
Just as my grinning monarch of the clouts
Rose on toe-tip to tilt his ladle o'er,
A slap from Edouard's open hand,—thank God
He wore no gauntlet, for the cook was fat—
Delivered, with a swing that frightened me,
Somewhere above the bowels, rolled him up,
As thoroughly as might be ; which being done
Sir Edouard took the courser by the bit,
Making the boy come off him, and they two
Went to his lodgings, while the gasping cook
Became the centre of the courtyard. I
Turned back to table, as was natural,
Having twelve hours of fasting and hard fight
Between me and a meal. Be it known that I
Am no believer in refined beliefs.
Edouard hath talked to me of sympathy,
And union of two souls, though far away,
And spite of certain interjected facts,

That would, I must confess it, puzzle me,
And move my bile, were mine one of such souls.
Nathless, beyond denial, 'twas most strange
The leap he made from table when that boy
Rode through the courtyard, and the appetite
Wherewith he, little giv'n to roughnesses,
Distributed his buffets right and left,
And bore the lad away to hear his tale ;
A tale which, by the way, he ne'er retold,
Not even to me nor to the Sieur. He came
Back pale, and with much hurry in his face
And speech ; and said, ' Good cousin, I have heard
Somewhat just now that lets me from you all
To night ; you, Hubert, if you will,
Your following and mine, I'll take with me.'
Then, with a smile, for doubtless my face fell
With thinking of the loss of such a ride,
' Old friend, we shall have work enough to do,
And of the prettiest.' The Beaumanoir
Said laughing, ' Cousin, be that as it may,
I trust thee, and can part with thee and him.'
So, ere the sun had sunk, we two set off
With six score horse upon the Rouen road."

BOOK II.

SO far the Mastiff, as a hound might tell
Who laid him on the scent, and how ; but why
Was scarce within his knowledge or his care.
It was enough for him that Edouard said,
“ Hubert, the hour hath come, and he must die ;
I must not slay him, as I showed to thee
At the beginning ; whatsoe’er the chance
Or method of our venture, he is thine ;
Remember.” So towards Rouen they rode on ;
The Mastiff happy ; as the dawn to birds,
The prospect of hard fighting was to him ;
And as for Edouard, Hubert only knew
The surface change his hope had clad him in.
“ We made a plump of some six score,” he writes,
“ Beside myself, and Edouard, and the Boy.
All night we rode ; and hour by hour we talked
Of this and that, digesting our emprise.

Not that he needed much debate ; he seemed
To know Red Robert's castle stone by stone,
And counted off his followers man by man.
And ever and anon he would call up
First one and then another of our band,
Whom he knew worth the trust, and give him charge
Of such and such a point ; and doing so,
To one would tell the nature of the ground,
Low patches in the wall for escalade,
And angles that gave foothold ; to another
How faced some postern, how it had no locks,
And only held by cross-bars which would turn,
If such and such a pin were drawn. In sooth,
Had I not known him, I had said, 'Ho, ho,
Fair Edouard, thy five years have been, poor man,
Not altogether pastimeless ; ah well ;
The night was fashioned to redress the day !
How many moons that lit Red Robert's casque,
As he passed out upon some thievish ride,
Have glimmered on his Lady's arm, that hung
Down from her casement, while she watched for thee ?'
But well I knew they were not thus ; and yet,
Perchance because I rode on silently,
A length or two in front, marvelling much,

And withal saddened somewhat, and self-wroth
To think, poor patient heart, how all those years
I, living by his side, had let him plan,
Ponder, and perfect that emprise alone ;
Or even, perchance, not knowing how I knew
Him and fair Angeline—for I am wont
To laugh at large at this or that, until
The best of me lacks credit—he rode up,
And laying out a hand on one of mine,
' Hubert,' said he, 'I would that thou shouldst know
How I have learned this Moulineaux by heart.
Some half score times, or more, I have been there,
Habited as a Troubadour, and begged
A supper and a lodging ; I have sat,
My Hubert, I have sat in the man's hall,
Or rather in the human devil's hell,
And sung my songs of Provence at his will
To him and all his fiends, who knew me not ;
And eaten his own bread with him, whereof
I do repent somewhat, but 'twas at most
The measure of my treason, e'en to him
Who bought my darling, bought her ! Thus thou seest
I got to know his den inside and out.
Not otherwise, I swear to thee.' Then I,

‘Nay, spare me that ; I never doubted thee,
Still less the spotless Lady, who shall yet
Be thine, unless this little mace hath lost
Some weight and temper.’ Thus did we hold on
Until the dawn ; no band of night-riders
Ever was merrier ; Edouard himself,
Now spurring on in front, now on the flanks,
Now reining back upon the rearguard, rode
With this one and with that ; and he who was
So silent heretofore on march, that they
Who knew not of his sorrow called him sour,
Was full of light talk and apt questioning
Of arms, horse, children, wife, or wench, to each ;
Till the whole troop was filled from van to rear
With joyous marvel, and his spirit caught
All in the toils of its own gladsomeness.

In one long week we crossed broad Normandy,
From Montfort to the Seine ; skirted by Rennes,
Fougères, and Mortain, Tinchebrai, and Falaise,
Bernay, and Bourgtheroulde. By night we rode
But halted much by day, camping concealed
In woods and copsy places, chosen coigns
Of heath, or by some willow-hidden ford,
For fear of English riders ; ne’er till then

Had any troop with Edouard in it turned
So often out of harm's way ; yet, for all
There was no fighting, 'twas not a dull march ;
For pleasant beyond telling 'twas to me
To catch in our good Edouard, hour by hour,
Fresh touches of the lightsome Troubadour
He was, up to that cursèd afternoon,
When old Sir Raoul's message made us halt
Midway 'twixt Pont de l'Arche and Rouen town.
For he would suddenly break on ahead,
Putting the whole band to a hand-gallop,
And, as his rowelled charger lunged and sprang,
Sitting with low hands on the withers, he
Would troll out snatches from good hawking-songs
I had not heard for five years gone or more ;
One more than all, which half the men-at-arms
Knew, and came bellowing on behind us, making
A gabble of tunes and measures, like a pack
Of faulting hounds, that catch a leader's note,
And fling their tongues at random after him.

“ ‘ LA BELLE CHASSERESSE.

“ ‘ By meadow, and down, and hollow,
 Lake, marish, and river sides,
We follow, follow, follow,
 Wherever my Lady rides.

“ ‘ A heron is up from the reeds,
 Away goes her falcon true,
We catch at the reins of our steeds,
 For away goes my Lady too.

“ ‘ With a cry to the hawk, and the knight
 Who spurs at her saddle-bow,
And a touch on her courser light,
 Who well doth her light touch know ;

“ ‘ He knoweth the signal well,
 And the rings of his silver bit,
Keep tune to his frontlet bell,
 As he flingeth and champeth it ;

“ ‘ And the spring of his lithe loin is lither,
 And fleeter his fleet foot skims,
As he feels upon flank and wither
 The press of her dainty limbs.

“ ‘Sour Robin may swear and stumble,
Fat Willie may flounder and fall,
We laugh at the curse and the tumble,
And turn to my Lady’s call.

“ ‘And after her, knight and rider
Jostle, and strive, and cry,
Till dead on the heather beside her
Falcon and quarry lie.

“ ‘So with hie-away, hark, and halloa,
No matter what chance betides,
We follow, follow, follow,
As long as my Lady rides.’

“ At length one morning, just ere cock-crowing,
We rode into the forest of La Londe,
La Londe, that with the woods of Rouvray clothes
A hilly spur of country towards the north,
From Bourghtheroulde to Rouen, well-nigh closed
Within a great loop of the winding Seine.
The season was mid autumn ; we drew rein
In a long grassy glade through which ruts ran,
Scored by the charrettes of the wood-farmers,

Who come in spring for oak bark, and again
In autumn for the seasoned trunks, that lay
In plenty even then. Our halt had been
Where the main woods fall back on either side,
As river shores that have a lake-like trend ;
And only pollard hornbeam and low thorns
Studded the green like islands. There we camped,
Posted our scouts to stop chance country folk,
Broke fast, and so to sleep ; I woke at noon,
To find the camp alive with fresh-caught clowns,
Whom we were bound to clap a claw upon,
Lest news of us should get to Moulineaux,
Which lay within a league ; there they all sat,
Rough-poll'd, round-eyed, like bush-faced owls ;
 in rows,

Each with his feet bound safely to the log
He sat upon ; their charrettes stood around
Unladen ; and their hobbled horses strayed
In groups along the glade, philosophers
Beyond their masters, for they set themselves
Without ado to their forced holiday,
And bared their foreteeth to the napless turf,
Much to my admiration.

 We dined well,

For few men better than our Edouard knew
The merit of full stomachs before fight ;
And for this end we stayed by Bourghtheroulde,
To buy a barique of good wine, and meats,
And wheaten bread in plenty. After food
Our men, in whom the Malvoisie had worked,
Made very merry with their prisoners,
As boys with bulrush plumes will tickle owls,
Or brush the eyes of a gorged hawk with feathers.
Poor clowns, how they sat blinking ; as much eased
As overfed ; longing to crown with sleep
The perfect dinner that had cast out fear.
Alas, no broad mouth quivered to a yawn,
But a well-planted clod of ready turf
Filled it as soon as opened ; not a chin
Sank, but a dagger-point or buckle pricked
The flat nose overhanging it ; at last
Edouard, who never loved camp jesting, bade
A squire to fetch his lute, and thereto sang
Song after song, and drew the men away ;
And even roused the drowsy clowns so far,
That while a final jug of Malvoisie
Went round, a growing rumour from them ran,
That Jacques, the sabot-cutter, sang a song.

So Edouard straightway had his feet cut loose,
And made them roll a log into the midst,
And set him on it, 'mid a general shout
Of 'To it, Jacques! Thy song, Jacques; sing it,
man!'

Then Jacques, with one last sup of Malvoisie,
Took heart, and wiping his huge lips and chin,
And lifting up his snub nose unto heaven,
And screwing down his eyebrows on his cheek,
Sent forth an undulating squall, whereto,
Unlike our band, his fellows had perchance
Grown callous or affectioned with much use;
For each one bowed, or beat a foot, or swung
A shaggy head, or crooked fingers tapped,
In uncouth concert with each villainous stave,
From us unto the bard, and him to us,
Looking approval; but, I wot, our mien
Had not been of the gravest through it all,
But that good Edouard, with his lute on knee,
And kindly eyes that mocked not, and deft hands
Catching a chord that suited now and then,
Made such a show of liking as warned back
Our laughter; nay, no sooner did the bard
Reopen his stitched eyelids, and reduce

The elevation of his nostrils, than
He bade him, with some easy words of praise,
To sing the whole once more ; which being done,
Much to the joy of the bewildered clowns,
And marvel of the sabot-cutter, thus
He sang himself ; 'twas the man's song and tune
Thrown back to him re-shapen, like rough ore
Given to the finder coined.

“ LE SABOTIER DE LA LONDE.

“ ‘ My father was a knight of worth
In all save that which gave me birth,
But, quit of his high fatherhood,
I live a peasant of this wood :

Moi, je ne suis qu'un Sabotier !

“ ‘ Here from the daylight until noon,
Chopping the beechwood into shoon,
I work and sing, then down sit I
Where the chips I make are heaped up dry ;

Moi, je ne suis qu'un Sabotier !

“ ‘ I dip my can in the water-mill,
Of good galette I eat my fill,

Then where the rank wood-plants are deep,
 I stretch me out for a noonday sleep ;
 Moi, je ne suis qu'un Sabotier !

“ ‘The world is hot, but its woods are cool ;
 Who leaves the woods is an arrant fool ;
 Life's beaten road, with its dust and sun,
 Is a long day's work that is never done ;
 Moi, je ne suis qu'un Sabotier !

“ ‘Where men are many all ills are brewed ;
 We are but few in this quiet wood ;
 Too few for strife, or spite, or woe ;
 Peste ! Here comes Jeanne with that fool Junot !
 Moi, je ne suis qu'un Sabotier !’

“ So sang he to their great bewilderment,
 And little less to ours, wont as we were
 To hear him in like fashion ; but that day
 Made light of all our memories ; he seemed
 Possessed by something that was thrice himself,
 Divine, lit through by splendid happiness,
 Aflame with power.

The laughter and the songs

Ceased with his own ; th' October afternoon
Began to lose its brightness, and the glade
Steamed like a sweated horse ; ' Now men,' cried he,
' The skies are clear ; on such a night as this
E'en a dark iron morion or breast-piece
Hath somewhat of an awkward flash on it,
For work like ours ; get you to yonder ponds,
And even to your pike-heads smudge your gear ;
Stand neither for the soiling nor for rust,
To-morrow I'll find scourers.' So they went,
With gibe and scuffle, and were back again
In half an hour, browner than marish frogs
From cap to stirrup-iron. As they formed
Three deep across the green, Edouard rode up
Bareheaded to the front of them, and resting
His helmet on his saddle-pommel, said :
' Good fellows all, it pleases me to think
That some of you at least have ridden this ride,
As ye have ridden it, for love of m ;
And I would thank you for it, and in turn
Would trust, as unto friends who feel for me,
What after all some of you know perchance,
How comes it that this thief of Moulineaux
Should be mine enemy. Five years ago——

And then he paused, as loath to say it out ;
And ere he could begin again, forth spurred,
A pace or two, Robin of Concarneau ;
A gloomy patch was Robin in the troop,
Sullen and cross withal to man and beast ;
But a good man-at-arms, and had command
Of twenty men under my lieutenant.
He in a voice less rough than was its wont,
But louder and more eager, cried, ‘ What need
To tell us ? We all know, and have all sworn
To win thee forth the Lady, and to burn
That Devil’s hold, and slay him. Ay, mates, ay ? ’

“ So spake grim Robin, turning to the troop
With his last words ; they one and all set up
A cheer, with rattling of their partizans
And bucklers ; Edouard for one moment hid
His forehead in his helmet plumes, and then
Looked up, and reined his horse round, waved his
hand,
And striving with his voice, gave word to march ;
And off we set. I rode by my friend’s side ;
But in a little while he lingered back,
Till Robin came abreast us, and I saw
The trooper’s hand in his ; and Robin said,

‘Sir Knight, say nought to me ; three days ago
You laughed at the sour Robin in your song ;
Du Guesclin’s knights at times have called you sour ;
Can you not guess now wherefore I am so ?
Nor why I help you with such mighty will
To slay this devil—as I think we shall—
Or die in the failure ?’ Edouard looking on him,
With brimful eyes, said, ‘Robin I sha’n’t sing
That song again.’ But he, ‘Nay, sing it, Sir ;
’Twill please me you should sing it ; I shall catch
A touch of pity in the way you sing
That shall be worth the name to me.’ With that
The knight rode on, but I, as I looked back,
Saw that poor Rob was weeping.

The moon rose

High, ere we reached the edges of the wood,
And halting on a rise in the green road,
Caught our first outlook upon open ground,
And saw our work before us. There it stood,
Two bowshots each way from the nearest trees,
Perched on a cluster of rough knolls, that rose,
Rolling one over other up from Seine.

“ ‘Not an ill-chosen nest, my carrion crow !’
Thought I ; ‘a river in your front that takes

Some crossing, and about you woods, whose paths
Are just so many miles of ambushade.

Not an ill-chosen nest, my bird of night !

Newly built too !' However, I soon saw

The spot that made its weakness. 'Twas a court,

Oblong, with round towers at the angles, keep,

Gatework and barbican; the curtain ran

From knoll to knoll; where the ground sank, 'twas
high,

But on the rises low, and at one point,

Close to the western tower wheretoward we looked,

The turf heaved up so suddenly, it seemed

As if the wall were nought but parapet.

And truly 'twas nigh that; the Thief had thought

By scarping there to save his masonry;

Nathless the builder had not dared to pick

Too close to his foundations, so had left

Just enough level soil at his wall's foot

To let a man creep round above the scarp,

And plant a ladder; not that this had been

Too simple, had the flanking tower been kept

Wellwatched and manned; but as our Edouard knew

From the page boy—who had passed to and fro

Twice since we started out from Bourgtheroulde—

That night there was high roustering within,
For some good robber's reason, and the tower
Was left but to one warder, whom the lad
Was pledged to rid us of, taking the watch
Himself from dusk to midnight. Well ;
We left our horses tethered, under care
Of twenty men for rearguard, while the rest
Parted, and took four stations in the wood ;
One opposite each postern, and a fourth
Facing the western tower.

Edouard went on,
In character of wandering Troubadour,
On horseback with his squire ; half armed, in hood
And hosen, and a leathern doublet caped
With a short hauberk reaching to his loins.
A light mace and long dagger in his belt
Were his sole weapons, and th' eternal lute
Hung in its ribbons at his back ; his sword,
Helmet, and lance, with all his other gear,
Piled on a sumpter, followed with the squire.

“ We watched him till he turned behind a knoll
That hid the road up to the barbican ;
Then in the stillness of the night we heard
The warder's challenge, his reply, the clank

Of the loose drawbridge as its chains ran out,
The creak and rattle of the portcullis,
The dull thud of his horse across the planks,
And all was still ; the bold man, life in hand,
Had ridden in to find his enemy.
With what a pleasant ache my heart did yearn
To see so good a play so well begun !
I took the little mace, and for sheer joy
Split down the fork of an oak sapling. Ah,
My little mace ! I look, and see thee now
Hanging above my pallet on the wall ;
To fail me on that night, that night of all !
And yet, not thou, 'twas I ; I never could
Strike, if a man looked dead ; I should have laid
The felon's brains out on his own floor-planks,
And so made surer. Well ; we saw at length
The page boy's signal from the western tower,
And I, and twenty with me, gat us out,
And stealing under cover of the knolls,
That favoured us, came underneath the scarp,
And round it, and then up along the ledge,
And over the low curtain ; it so chanced
There were no warders either east or north,
For martial order in that lawless hold

Was of the slackest, and the guard had slipped
To get an extra stoup in the great hall,
And listen to the Troubadour : Ned's songs
Had gained a fame among Red Robert's band
That stood us in good stead. In little time
We had the posterns open, and our men
Safe in the base court ; on we pressed at once,
I, Robin, and the twenty, on tiptoe,
Led by the Boy, straight for the gateway tower ;
For there sat thirty of their men-at-arms
At supper in the guard-room ; so I turned
The key on them, and drew the bars across
The doorway ; also all along our way
Did I drop men behind us, two and two,
To strangle any wench or serving-man
Who chanced to need it, and to keep our rear
Clear to the court. Thus to the Hall we came,
Some twelve of us at last, sent in the Boy,
Whose coming was the signal of our own
To Edouard, and then waited at the doors.
As the page entered, rough Red Robert's voice
Was shouting for more music, and his Guest,
For so it had been settled, without word,
Struck up the prelude to our hawking song,

'The Pretty Huntress ;' line by line it swung,
 As easy as a hand-gallop, until
 He came upon the verse that opens thus,
 'Sour Robin may swear and stumble'
 And then we thought his voice grew tremulous
 Suddenly, like a man's who sees somewhat
 That disconcerts him, and the first quick plunge
 Of fear shot through me of some accident ;
 When close beside mine ear I heard a voice ;
 It was sour Robin humming ; I turned round,
 And saw his face barred by a shaft of light
 That smote upon it through the ill-framed door :
 He seemed transformed with pleasure, as he craned
 Over my shoulder towards the hinge crevice
 Whence the light came. Small time was there to
 crane ;
 For Edouard, rising, with his lute on knee,
 And voice that rose, and trembled as it rose,
 Sang :

" ' Well had he loved my Lady,
 That knight at her saddle-bow,
 Had seen of her need, and was ready,
 And that did my Lady know ;

“ ‘And he it is now who singeth
This song in her tyrant’s hall ;
See, see, what his last note bringeth !
Ho, glaives to my Lady’s call !’

“ Then, with the battle-cry of Beaumanoir,
In rushed the twelve ; I only caught a sight
Of Edouard, with his arm round Angeline,
Fighting his way out to the door ; for me,
Amid the din of tumbling benches, screams
From frightened women, of a class to fear
Death rather than dishonour, fighting men
Yelling aloud for arms, scared servitors
Dropping their loads, I leaped, and thrust, and strode,
And stumbled till I reached my man : he stood
Glaring at Edouard, now half down the hall
With his fair prize of war ; he had plucked down
A huge two-handed weapon from the wall
Behind him, and was just in act to spring
Over the daïs table in pursuit,
When I confronted him ; blood-hot with rage
He turned on me ; I was well clad in proof,
And he in a cloth doublet and trunk hose,
With not so much as a silk bonnet on ;

I never cared to fight at too great odds,
So said full fairly, ' For the love of God,
Take thee some head-piece, man ! This bee of mine,'
Giving the little mace a twirl, ' were loath
To buzz about bare temples ; call thy squire ;
I'll give thee time.' But ere my words were out
The violent fool made at me, with a blow
Of such intention, it swept off my qualms,
As a wind sweeps dead leaves from a grass hill.
And so to work we went : he stood entrenched
Behind the table, and his sword was long,
While I had only shield and mace ; too much
Hung on the bout to throw a chance away ;
So catching his next stroke with a high shield,
I leaped upon the table, and thus took
His vantage, and being once within his guard,
Lost little time ; my first blow crushed the bones
Of his left hand against his cheek ; my next
Came cleanly on his temple ; down he sank
Without a quiver, and the thing was done.
And just in time, for, as he dropped, I heard
A rush behind me, and good Robin's voice
Shouting to turn : I swung round, and fell back
Against the wainscot, half blind and half stunned :

It was a valorous wench, and stout withal,
Had swung a broken bench with both her hands
Round on my basinet ; I staggered down,
Feeling, as I imagine barnfowls feel,
When suddenly some cook's stick catches them
An indecisive tap across the wattle.
However, I made shift to get me up
By Robin's help, though sorely dazed ; when, lo,
My girl at sight of Robin, shrieks his name,
And tumbles in a swoon ; while he, poor man,
Gives a great groan, and lets me down again,
And falls to loosening of her bodice pins.
All this I was too sick to marvel at,
And scarce could bear the motion in my throat
Enough to mutter, ' Look behind thee, Rob ! '
When three set on him all at once. Alas,
Good fighter as he was, he fought but ill,
And seemed half looking at the fainted girl,
And only half at the three blades that danced
About his morion and corselet ; once
I tried to help him, but that cursèd stool
Had stopped my table jumping for some while.
It made me gnash my teeth to see one knave,
While our poor man, whose morion had slipped,

Was more than busy with the other two,
Shorten his sword, and stick him in the throat,
Like a store hog ; down he fell prone, good Robin,
And lay for once—ay, by God's love, perchance
Knew it a little while before he died—
Bosom to bosom with the girl he loved,
While all his life-blood welled out over her.
If one must live in misery for love,
I take it Rob's was a good death to die.
But, be that as might be, I had small space
To think on it, for up came mine esquire
To say the castle folk were rallying ;
And that our fellows had had much ado,
Being outnumbered, now that Beaumanoir
Had gone off with some fifty, to defend
Th' approaches to the gateway tower, whereof
The guard we trapped would soon break down the
door ;
Which done, 'twas overlikely that we all
Should follow Robin and Red Moulineaux.
I could scarce walk, and every step I took
Struck like a wedge driven upward to my brain.
Since then I've never seen a beech-log split,
But I have thought of that false vigorous quean

And her most cursèd settle. With much pain,
I made my way across the open ground,
And came to Beaumanoir and Angeline,
Safe in the wood. We had but two men killed,
And half a dozen wounded, more or less,
Not one so sorely that he might not ride,
Saving for me ; our horses all stood loose
And ready ; with a groan of misery,
I let myself be thrust up on to mine,
And slipped down shock into the saddle seat,
As helpless as a falling portcullis ;
While such a quivering twang of agony
Rang up my backbone, that I yelled aloud.
' Oh, laugh once more, and, by the splendour of God,
I'll flay thee !' cried I to a tittering squire.
Too plain 'twas that I could not ride that night,
Beyond a foot's pace ; so they left me there
With mine own folk, some score of men-at-arms,
Beside my squires, and all the rest at trot,
With many kindly farewells, mixed with thanks,
From Edouard and fair Angeline—all which
I took but with sour grace, so sore was I—
Pushed on for Bourgtheroulde.

'Od's will,' thought I,

As they rode off, 'I'd liefer that my heart
Were broken ten times than my back wrung once !'
But help was none ; I watched them up the glade,
Saw the moon flash on their last morion,
Leaned over from my horse into men's arms,
Like some sick girl, and, propped against a tree,
Sat aching, while my fellows made for me,
A hand litter of wattled ash branches,
Strewn, not amiss, with fir sprigs and heaped fern ;
This, with my saddle strapped up at one end,
To make a pillow, served me passing well ;
And so, my face turned helpless to the stars,
Working by turns, but stumbling overmuch,
They bore me safely into Bourgtheroulde.
There lay I for some fifteen days or more,
Till I could ride again, and then went on
By Falaise and Fougères to Josselin."

BOOK III.

HERE had I gladly stayed ; I seemed to see
The two ride off into those misty woods,
As actors in life's tragedy set free,
Who having played a bitter play, thus made
Their exit into happiness ; the while
The moon, the lover's planet, and the earth,
Associate for their welcome, had let fall
A lustrous veil to screen their onward path
From the past rack and fever. But, alas,
There is a power within us that impels
Our spirits to the close of all things sad ;
In spite of our own hearts that cry to us,
Like some poor kneeling woman, with clenched hands,
Flung in the way of a rash man, who sees
The ruin that he will not see. Besides,
As I sat turning over page on page,
I came across fresh songs of Beaumanoir,

And needs must know th' occasion of them ; thus
I showed myself the miserable end.

Through ten sweet days they rodetowards Brittany,
From point to point, back on his outward road ;
And as his hope had grown in coming, grew
In both of them, through their fulfilled return,
A sweet sense of perfection in relief ;
A solemn peace, a gentle ecstasy
Of joy, that was a worship of joy's self ;
And made his journey seem a sacred thing,
And every bivouac and halting place,
Marked by its camp-refuse and perished fires,
The stages of some holy way, refund
After a pilgrimage. Near Josselin
There stood a convent of the Ursulines,
Whereof his cousin by the father's side,
Constance de Beaumanoir, was Prioress.
There rested Angeline, an honoured guest,
With the good Nun, who knew her story well,
And judged its issue with all tenderness,
And justice, and with something of that breadth
Of charity, whereof men love to boast,
More than they love to use it. In her arms
Folded, and happy, Angeline was left,

By the low doorway in the convent wall ;
And Edouard set his eyes on her no more,
Until he sought her on her marriage-morn.

 Their marriage-morn, alas, their marriage-morn !
It broke on them with gaiety and sun,
All brilliance, and all beauty, and all joy :
A jewelled cradle for a life still-born ;
A flash, a phantom of eluding light,
Presaging bliss, precluding misery ;
Death's mocking Angel, with a mask of life
And robe of promise wrapped about the bones ;
A hideous cheat of nature and of fate,
At which all Hell might laugh for cruelty !
They came before the altar, paid their vows
By agony and delay thrice sanctified ;
The priest had blessed them, and the man and wife
Went, followed by Heaven's incense, down the Nave.
And at God's very doors the Devil stood
To welcome them, her husband, in his flesh,
Evil and hale, full armed, his vizor up,
A laugh of hate spreading his branded cheeks,
Like Satan grinning through the bars of Hell
On saints who flounder on their way towards
 Heaven.

“ And wouldst thou wed again so soon, sweet dame ?
So soon, even supposing I were dead ?
Thy friend’s arm was less strong than thy desires,
My pretty flitter ! Hadst thou cared to wait
That evening when I seemed so dead, to wait,
And bid thy paramour make some one throw
A little earth on me for charity—
Any scant grave had made death real enough—
Nor left me stark and bloody in my hall,
Our hall, sweet wife, whereto we go, you know,
For a poor serving wench to find, and tend,
And bring to life, I had not now been here,
To thwart thee, and thy mincing playmate there ;
Adulteress ! ” Then Edouard, at that word,
Sprang at him from her side, and flung him back
Among the peasants, crying loud for rage
And anguish, “ No, by God, thou recreant,
Not that ! By that one word thou hast earned Hell,
And thou shalt have it ! Most accursèd man,
I said I would not slay thee, but my hope,
The hope in which I spared thee, is dead now ;
And I am free, ay, freed by my despair,
And may avenge her as I will. My arms !
Bear her off, Hubert, to the Ursulines.

Farewell, farewell, my love, my love, for ever.
Ah see, she faints !” And, as he spoke, she fell
Heavily on his breast ; he caught her up,
And tried to kiss her brows ; but her fair head
Fell backward from his lips. Then, at that sight,
Her husband, gnashing his fierce teeth, sprang forth,
And, plucking out a dagger as he sprang,
Stabbed at her ; but her lover, watching him,
Swung round, and dropped her into Hubert’s arms ;
And with his right hand clutched the murderer’s wrist,
And, planting a firm foot behind his heel,
Flung him ; down fell he with some varlet’s curse
Among the cowering crowd, but ere he rose
A dozen knees and hands had got him fast,
And he lay foiled and panting. “ Harm him not,”
Said Beaumanoir, “ but keep him where he lies,
Till my arms come ; give him no writhing room ;
He who would stab a woman in a swoon,
Were she not one whom may God pardon me
For likening to His Angels, is no knight
Whom knights may trust to wait till they be armed.”
So lay he in the roadway firmly bound,
Till Edouard stood before him clad in steel,
His vizor down, his shield upon his arm,

And his point lowered ; and bade them get from him,
And let him rise. Up came he to his doom,
Fierce, raving, while his furious breath in gasps
Steamed through his vizor ; but the Troubadour,
Cruelly calm, fatally passionless,
Flung his mad onslaught off, from left to right.
With blade and buckler, till the moment came,
When the wild blood gushed from the robber's throat,
While brand and shield dropped down, on either side,
From his relaxing hands ; and groaning loud,
And with one quivering gasp at a last curse,
Robert of Moulineaux crashed over, dead.

So passed from them their little gleam of bliss,
As one brief sun-shaft through some rift of cloud
The sullen heavens haste to close up again ;
Or as one sweet delirious hour of air,
And light, and gladsomeness, and company,
Men's voices, and the hubbub of the town,
The lines of market carts along the way,
Fresh hedgerows, and the dance of rivulets,
Song-birds, and gardens, common sights and sounds
Of their lost world, to prisoners for life,
Marching from prison-house to prison-house.
A bridge it was linking two miseries,

A shift of doom for doom, a balanced change
Of agony which tortured, but had hope,
For calm which did not torture, but had none.

Alas, so lost, so loving, and so young !
Life not half spent, yet nothing left of life ;
Love perfected, yet nothing left of love ;
Loss outlived once to be re-born for ever,
Twice knotted on the evil skeins of time,
That, once cut, death could only cut again.
Ay, only death, far death ; from both of them
Jealously hedged by the reluctant years ;
Th' inexorable years, that love to creep
At foot's pace to the wretched, lengthening out,
As skilful torturers, the long between
Of dreary growth from youth to middle age,
And middle age to dallying decay,
That holds its hand with theirs, and makes its sport
Of man's impatient welcome.

Yes ; they lived

Each to old age ; for Hubert's chronicle
Was written in his fiftieth year, he says ;
And Sister Angeline was living then,
And Prioress of the Convent on the Hill.
To that high place among the Sisterhood,

Her saintliness and beauty, and her zeal
For discipline, the Order, and good works,
Had raised her up ; and there perchance she found
A haven of repose in rule and prayer.
But Edouard had no heart for monkish things ;
He lived among the brethren, as he lived
Through those five years among Du Guesclin's knights,
Half known, and neither loved nor hated, yet
Awaking in men's hearts a sense akin
To love or hate ; his gifts, and graciousness—
For this he ever had—his valorous mien,
That bore itself e'en under gown and cowl,
The suffering in his dark Provençal face,
His knightly fame, the story of his wrong,
And knowledge that he loved, and had been loved
By one at once so holy and so fair,
Made those of kindlier sort to look on him,
With something of compassionate reverence.
But to the rest, the love of solitude
In one so gifted and so famous, one
Who was not bred a monk, and when he spoke,
The listless acquiescence of his talk,
With that intentionless indifference
To things they valued, but he valued not,

That stings the conscious meanness of the mean,
Seemed like disdain ; and, as at the camp-fire,
So in that cloister-pen of stunted souls,
Begot for him, who knew not what spleen was,
The half hate that is born of it. And yet,
Spleen or no spleen, hate or no hate, he lived
Honoured and free, with Hubert, as of old,
To lie down at his feet like a pet hound ;
Crippled hound too : he ne'er was hale again
After the night at Moulineaux ; perchance
He got to horse again too soon, or else
The arm of that stout handmaid had the strength
To work a lasting harm in his broad back.
Whate'er it was, he ne'er could raise a hand
Above his head ; and that, as he would say,
Stopped all his mace-play. But for this mishap,
He scarce had sacrificed his love of war,
Even for Edouard ; though, beside his hurt,
His love of war had sickened since his arm
Failed him so fatally ; his chronicle
Throws up remorse, like molehills, everywhere ;
He ever calls the fight at Moulineaux
“ That dark hour of miscarriage and rebuke,”
And lays his friend's fate to his own account,

As a great sin, never to be atoned
While Edouard lived and suffered, though he takes
His wry neck as his punishment. Poor Mastiff!
He whines in half-dumb tones, but tones withal
Loving, and that strive hard for tenderness,
Whene'er he talks of Edouard. I have culled
One page that rings more sadly than the rest,
Where all ring sadly, and may serve to close
This outline of a dreary history,
And show what waiting upon death may mean.

“I dare swear,” Hubert writes, “he never sang,
Save once, since we came here ; wherefrom I deem
His grief lies heavier on him than it lay
Through those five campaigns of the Constable ;
Yet well do I remind me of that once ;
'Twas a midsummer evening at nightfall ;
The sun had scarce set, though the moon had risen,
And the two lights blent everywhere ; we sat,
The Abbot, and the Prior, and myself,
Beside the fish-stews, on the granite bench
I chipped and set one winter ; 'twas still hot,
For there was little dew, and still less wind ;
The great plane leaves above us scarcely moved,
And over all the surface of the ponds,

As on a plated corselet or steel helm,
The red light lay unbroken ; e'en the carp
Still basked as though 'twere midday, or worked round
Lazily, while the flashing of their scales,
Whene'er they rolled up broadside to the sky,
Gave one more colour to the burnished pools.
I sat watching a toad crawl on the path,
And thinking how we crawl along our lives,
Without the same variety of stones
To pick our way through ; when a sudden sound
Shook all my body ; 'twas a lute string struck
At Edouard's window. How the sweet note swam
Throughout the garden ! Then another came,
And then the half-forgotten voice swelled out,
Like a soft hillside, fresh, and smooth, and large.
I put my hand upon the Prior's arm—
Who would have spoken—with a grip perchance
Too hard for the occasion ; but it gained
The silence that it asked ; the song was one
I knew right well ; he sang but part of it ;
But part or whole, I was so glad at heart,
I could have wept a welcome to it.

“ ‘LE JOUR MOURANT.

“ ‘ A twilight fair as ever fell is falling,
 Low, as thy lover’s whisper in the trees,
 Eve’s still small voice of many sounds is calling ;
 Hark, the half-weary wild-birds, at their ease,
 Flute a last farewell to the flying day ;
 Anon the nightingale’s clear measure taketh,
 From out the darkness of yon ilex-tree,
 Through the soft, wildered air its trembling way ;
 Day sinks o’erborne ; the hour of love awaketh,
 Waketh, my love, and waiteth upon thee.

“ ‘ The water-lilies’ open hearts of gold
 Are folded each within a fair white shrine,
 Matchlessly white, perchance, but ah ! too cold
 To rival those warm caskets over thine.
 Ah come, ah come ! The melancholy breeze
 Hath stolen his perfumes from unconscious Day,
 To forge thy breath and mock me, but its cry
 Betrayed it, as it swept the ilices ;
 So moans it ever, though all else be gay,
 While thy glad spirit cannot frame a sigh.

“ ‘ Along the lustrous causeway of the night
Yon queenlike moon proceedeth in her pride,
Quenching the clustered worlds in silver light ;
So shalt thou pass, oh maiden, as my bride,
Among the peasants on thy marriage morn.’

* * * * *

His voice fell, and he ceased with that last line,
As though the words had hurt him overmuch ;
I heard him sigh ; and many minutes passed
Ere he began again ; but all the time
The Prior was busy with good Abbot Jean,
About some monkish nonsense of the rules,
Of scandal to the Brothers, worldly songs,
And amorous recollections ill for monks,
And exercises that the Devil loves—
No bad judge that same Devil. In a while,
However, thanks to honest Father Jean,
Who stared into the pond, and held his peace,
Edouard began once more ; outswelled the chords,
Full as a gale ; it was a song I loved
Right well ; he used to sing it in old days
Before well-meaning Satan clawed his uncle,
Or that scarce lesser fiend fair Angeline.
Once more I held my friend the Prior down,

With such a force as might a warning be
 Of pains to follow, should his piety
 Prove too aggressive ; as I felt him wince,
 Came the sweet Envoi, and I let him go :
 ‘ This to the city on the silver Seine,
 Where my beloved dwells ;” and then two chords,
 And then a pause ; God, how I knew it all !

“ ‘ À ROUEN LA BIEN HEUREUSE.

“ ‘ Alas, that I should wander so,
 From her and thee, from her and thee,
Ah City,
 This quest of fame is quest of woe,
 Of woe in all simplicity,
Ah City,
 Ah happy, happy City where my beloved dwells.

“ ‘ From plain to hill, and hill to plain,
 And folk to folk that need redress,
Ah City,
 I drag myself with might and main
 From loneliness to loneliness,
Ah City,
 Ah happy, happy City, where my beloved dwells.

“The prayers that bid me mount my steed,
The cause that lays my lance in rest,
Ah City,
The stricken foemen as they bleed,
The white lips to my gauntlet pressed,
Ah City,
Ah happy, happy City, where my beloved dwells ;

“The grateful kiss of maid or knight,
The children clinging to my gown,
Ah City,
As I ride homeward from the fight,
Loud blessings from the leaguered town,
Ah City,
Ah happy, happy City, where my beloved dwells ;

“And all else paid to valorous feats,
Are nought to me, ah nought to me ;
Ah City,
For when they lead me through their streets,
I shake, and inly groan for thee,
Ah City,
Ah happy, happy City, where my beloved dwells.

He paused ; his lute had slackened ; and the Prior
 Might well have heard me curse the shifty strings ;
 But he spake nought, and Edouard soon sang on :

“ ‘ Say, dost thou deem thyself more fair,
 Possessing her, possessing her ?

Ah City,

Or doth the thought that she is there
 Abate one jot thy careless stir ?

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my belovèd dwells.

“ ‘ Comes there no glory on thy walls,
 The sun made never heretofore,

Ah City,

When through thy ways her light foot falls
 From neighbour’s door to neighbour’s door ?

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my belovèd dwells ;

“ ‘ Or o’er thy Seine no answering glow,
 Beyond the warmest evening gleam,

Ah City,

When on thy bridge she leans to throw
Love-freighted rose-leaves down the stream?

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my belovèd dwells.

“ Ah no ! to thee and all beside,

Save only me, save only me,

Ah City,

By God's great goodness 'tis denied

The fulness of her grace to see,

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my belovèd dwells.

“ But unto me the smallest sight,

Or sound, akin to aught in thee,

Ah City,

A church bell ringing in the night,

A street, a gable, or a tree,

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my belovèd dwells ;

“ O'ershadowing some burgher's eaves,

Some varlet's voice or huckster's cry,

Ah City,

Will shake my soul, as aspen leaves

Shake while all others silent lie,

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my belovèd dwells.'

"Once more a spiteful string fell flat, but I

Had got my fingers round the Prior's wrist,

And he was dumb ; perchance the song itself

Melted his virtue, for the words were fair,

And set unto a goodly melody.

So carp, and garden, Abbot, Prior, and I,

Listened, as on sang Edouard, and along

The upper dormitory windows stretched

A line of heads uncowed.

" 'God's love ! How sweet to dream that while

Her pale eyes to the pale moon shine,

Ah City,

They lend her that soft beam and smile

She sheddeth down to-night on mine,

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my belovèd dwells.

" 'And sweet, how very sweet, the thought

That from some kindred garden tree,

Ah City,

Such night-bird's notes to her are brought
As ever and anon to me.

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my beloved dwells.

“ ‘ And that like shadows of light leaves
Are playing o'er her shoulders white,

Ah City,

Where at her window 'neath the eaves

One tall plane whispers in the night,

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my beloved dwells.

“ ‘ But sweeter far, however sweet

May be this lover's phantasy,

Ah City,

(Like lips that lips with kisses meet),

To dream she too may dreaming be,

Ah City,

Ah happy, happy City, where my beloved dwells.’

“ But after this verse, while his hands drew out
A lingering cadence of most passionate sound,

We heard a string snap ; 'twas all over then ;
And as I let the vanquished Prior go,
I heard poor Father Jean sigh loud ; we rose ;
And, as we rose, the jangling chapel bell
Rang for th' inevitable evensong."

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